

Issue 36

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Fall Animation Preview

ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

Nickelodeon Debuts Two Prime Time Shows

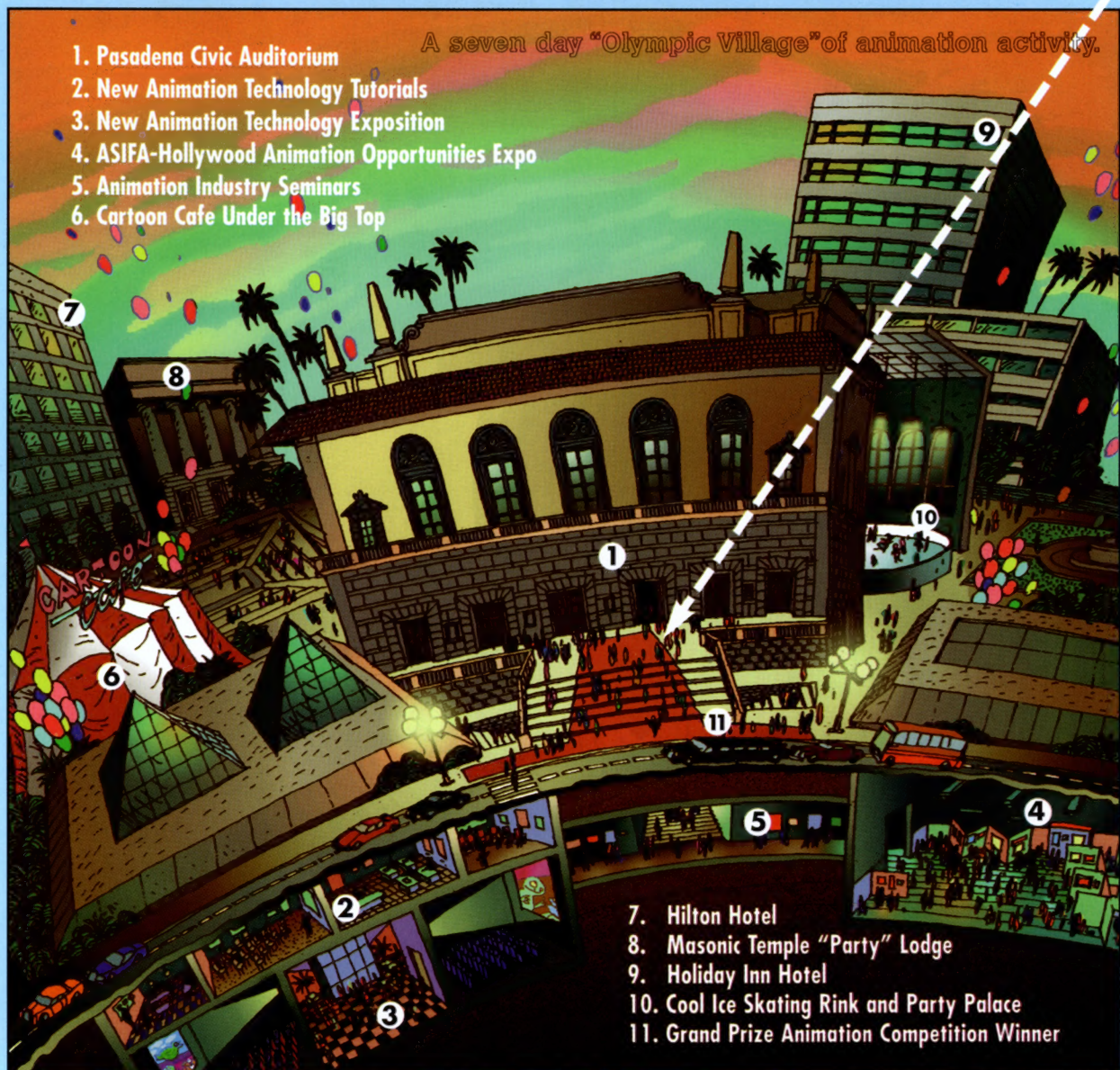


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ANIMATO!

The Animation Fan's Magazine

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About the Cover...

The new stars of Nickelodeon's Hey Arnold! and KABLAM! burst onto the scene. (© Nickelodeon)

PUBLISHER TORIAL



ANIMATO! is making people uncomfortable, again. J.J. Sedelmaier contacted us to let us know he was very uncomfortable with the appellation "animator" linked to his name. He says, "I haven't animated in ten years. I am a producer, it makes me uncomfortable to be called an animator. Please give credit to the folks who do the actual animation." Sure, O.K. Attention, everyone! Mr. J.J. Sedelmaier does the easy producer stuff while the talented, hard working employees at Sedelmaier Productions do the actual animation. Next thing you know, someone will call and tell me Walt Disney didn't really do the animation on all those Mickey shorts.

More people outside their comfort zone.

I received negative feedback on the *Ambiguously Gay Duo* picture in Sedelmaier's ad from various quarters. Who, incidently, are non-subscribing, narrow interest animation fans, who admit to not actually seeing an episode of the *Ambiguously Gay Duo*. (Good news! *Saturday Night Live* is picking up the AGD for broadcast.) We take complaints seriously here at ANIMATO! , but do you really think a child will be influenced by an advert for a cartoon? Judging from the letters we get from young

people, I'd say our young readers are sharp cookies who shouldn't be underestimated by concerned adults.

Keeping with the uncomfortable theme, if you want to torture me, prop open my eyeballs (imagine Malcolm McDowell in *A Clockwork Orange*) and force me to watch reruns of *Full House*. Actually anything with John Stamos or "Boob" Saget should send me over the edge. This has nothing to do with animation, but I had to get it off my chest.

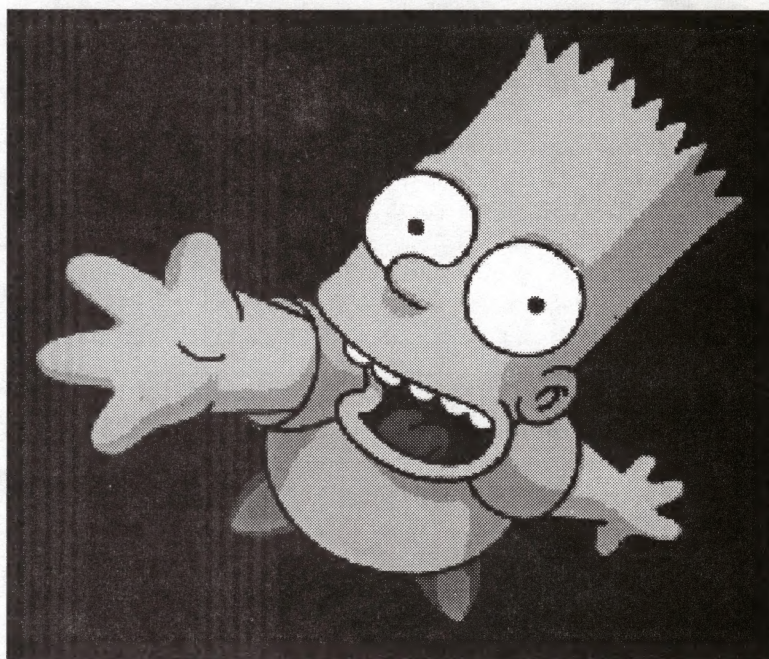
After ranting about the fuss over the Rigid Tools poster in the *Roger Rabbit* compilation, I stepped directly into one of life's little ironies. I had occasion to use a 24" pipe wrench manufactured by The

Ridge Tool Company. This particular model was labeled the *Ridgid 240*. Imagine that! A real life Ridgid Tool. Now I'm curious to know if a tool poster from a real company were displayed in the background of a live-action sitcom, would anyone complain?

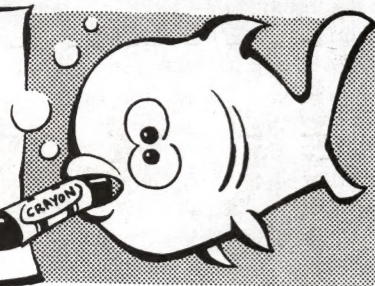
I'm being overly sensitive to attacks on animation because of our oft-repeated American Anthem that (all together now) "cartoons are just for kids." It boggles my mind that parents will get wound up about cartoons, but let the kiddies soak up bloody current events on CNN.

Bart Simpson is always welcome in my home, Orenthal Simpson is not.

© Twentieth Century Fox



FAN MAIL FROM SOME FLOUNDER



The Demise of Voice Professionals? Judy Reboy

I appreciate Bob Wilkie's correction on my piece on Toronto's CFTO-TV's butchering of Disney's made for TV offerings. I'd like to apologize to you and the readership of **ANIMATO!** for letting that gaff slip through. But especially, I would like to apologize to the CBC Television Network, whom I erroneously blamed for the horrible packaging.

On another note, regarding your editorial on Tony Jay, while I found his choice of words, to be charitable, unfortunately, he did bring up a point which fans seem somewhat reluctant to talk about. Like it or not, the professional voice artist seems to be an endangered species.

While many live action performers who are crossing over into animation do give excellent performances (Imagine *Gargoyles* without Keith David, for example), it does hurt to see incredible talent like Jim Cummings relegated to bit parts like the guards in both *Aladdin* and *Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Batman: The Animated Series did begin the trend to which Mr. Jay referred of more naturalistic voices on cartoons, and certainly it has had an impact. With the exception of Mr. Cummings' heartbreaking performance as Tygrus in *Tyger, Tyger*, I can't recall any professional voice actors having major roles on *Batman*. Frank Welker meowed for Catwoman's cat Isis, and others a few others like Charlie Adler got bit parts.

Add to that the fact that, as with all jobs in Hollywood, executives love familiar names. Suddenly the casts of *Star Trek* and *Beverly Hills 90210* are competing with veteran voice artists for the same roles. And simply because of their fame, they do have an advantage.

As long as the "name" people bring something special to their roles, of course, they should be welcomed. Kate Mulgrew and Brent Spiner were wonderful on *Gargoyles*. And who can argue with the wisdom of hiring the likes of Phil Hartman for *Eek! The Cat* or anything else?

Let's just hope that in a year or two, the major studios won't be showing greats like Cummings, Kath Soucie and Maurice



Anime expert John Beam crosses Sailor Moon with a popular American cartoon sailor for cross cultural fun!

LaMarche the door because they don't have name recognition.

Incidentally, I think that you were being a bit harsh in your implication that David Warner, Tim Curry and (bad career choices aside) JoBeth Williams qualify as "the refugees from sitcoms and USA Network movies of the week who Jay proudly cites as distinguished colleagues." All three of them have proven themselves to be

versatile actors. They really don't deserve to be reduced to collateral damage because of Mr. Jay's thoughtless remarks. Can we agree to disagree on this count?

Lastly, I must say that I enjoyed your informative article on *Arabian Knight*. No wonder the finished product — at least the version released domestically — seems to have been stuck together by Tack's pins! It would be

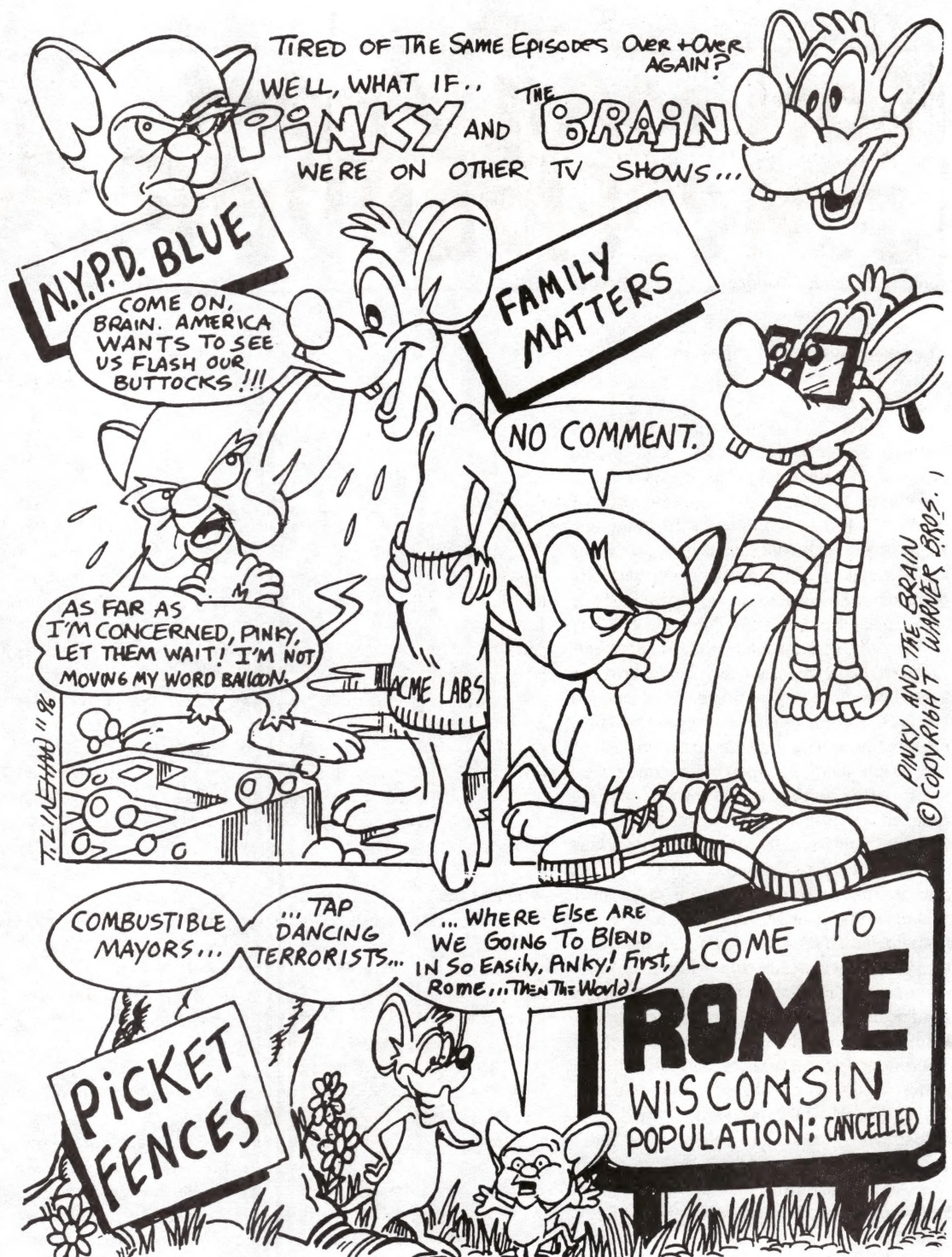
nice to see the alternate version surface somewhere, but given the film's commercial failure, I wouldn't hold my breath!

Actually I really like those three actors mentioned by Tony Jay, and, of the three, Tim Curry has done some fine vocal work in animation. I was simply so put out by the pontificating Mr. Jay that the rhetoric just flowed out of the Mac! While some "name brand" performers understand the demands of voice acting and give admirable performances, too many of them are cast for their own speaking voice and the performances are secondary to the stunt value of their appearance on an animated cartoon. GMD

Kudos for An Arabian Knight-mare
Kevin L. Knoles

I'd like to compliment you on *An Arabian Knight-mare*, an amazingly well researched, informative, and just plain entertaining article that surpassed my high expectations. However, there is one minor detail I thought you might wish to know of - Miramax did mention Williams in their Saturday morning television ads seen during *Reboot* (At least that's when I saw them.) If memory serves "From the acclaimed animator of *Roger Rabbit*" was said at the beginning of the commercial(s). That's likely not an exact quote, so I recommend obtaining videos of *Reboot* with commercials intact taped during that period, or better yet, contact Miramax directly for confirmation.

Thanks for the kind words and the clarification. I hope I can present a follow-up article soon that will present more information on this film. GMD



Reader Tom Linehan shares his view on Pinky and The Brain.

Send your cards, letters, drawings, etc. to ANIMATO!,
17 Spruce St., Springfield, MA 01105 or put your
comments right into the editor's computer by e-mailing
them to mdobbs@javanet.com



TOON REVIEWS



by Patrick Duquette, Andrew Osmond, Gene Gumbs, Brenda Ainsburg, and G. Michael Dobbs

Theatrical/Video/TV

Joe's Apartment

Viacom, the media giant which owns almost everything not included in the Time-Warner/Ted Turner merger, has decreed that its lucrative cable tv arms should produce theatrical motion pictures bearing the logos of Nickelodeon and MTV. On paper, the move seems to make sense; capitalize on the millions of movie-goers who also happen to watch both cable networks. Afterall, videos of MTV and Nick shows and spinoffs have done well enough and the Nick topline is a success. Movies seem logical.

So this summer we've seen the first Nick movie, *Harriet the Spy*, which has done mediocre business. It undoubtedly will do great on home video where anything rated G is snapped up by anxious parents.

The MTV debut movie sunk like a stone at theaters, though. *Joe's Apartment* was based on clever short films featuring animated cockroaches seen on MTV, and to green-light a feature-length film based on these gloried station i.d. bumpers was a gutsy one.

Afterall, if MTV had wanted to insure some great box-office, a 90-minute film of Jenny McCarthy playing beach volleyball or grocery shopping or doing her laundry, would have probably have fit the bill.

I admire their decision because making an urban comic love story featuring talking cockroaches took true moxie. Making a film about Jenny McCarthy would have been the easy way, but it wouldn't have been the Cowboy Way!

Still someone in their marketing department or research and development must have realized the awful truth. No matter how clever, witty or hip the finished film might be, it is still about....roaches. And not those roaches that people light up while watching MTV, either.

Hey, ants are hard-working; ladybugs have got families; crickets can be good luck; grasshoppers and katydids sing...cockroaches spread disease. People don't like cockroaches. They are not a cute bug, and with the exception of Don Marquis' Archy and Mehitabel stories

and poems, cockroaches have never been the object of affection.

So, roll the dice and make a film about an farm boy from Iowa who moves to New York and who lucks onto an incredibly dirty, but rent-controlled, apartment only to find that his new best friends are the 20,000 singing, talking, dancing roaches in his place. The film's humor and funky charm will disarm the natural aversion to roaches and the fledgling MTV will attract millions.

Well, not quite.

Joe's Apartment doesn't deserve its fate. A well-made romantic comedy, it tries to translate the hip MTV atmosphere to a feature-length narrative. Rather than make a movie about music (probably a wise move considering how quickly musical tastes can change), the network made a feature which sums up its attitude.

Wise man and film promoter David Friedman once said that you sell the sizzle, not the steak. In this case, the MTV attitude is both the steak and the sizzle, and it works for *Joe's Apartment*.

Joe's Apartment serves up one disgusting vision of new York City that begins with a roaches' eye view of the city. As the singing roaches fly through the New York skyline, you can't miss the film maker's point...from viewed from the right distance all of us resemble tiny scurrying insects. (hmmm, I wonder if this is also a homage to *Mr. Bug Goes to Town*?)

Our hero is played with naive sincerity by Jerry O'Connell who suffers through many hardships only to land an apartment in a doomed building. He doesn't mind the mess he's inherited and is a slob of the first water himself. When he unwittingly provides food for the roaches who expect instead to be killed, he's made thousand of friends without knowing it.

The film is very clever in setting up a roach society (they even have their own television show), and a roach philosophy (they don't understand the concept or need for privacy). They are loyal romantics who'd make excellent friends, except they are roaches!

The use of stop motion animation, computer-generated animation, and real roaches (that's the point at which my wife decided she couldn't see the film) creates a seamless illusion that makes this must-viewing for animation fans.

Put aside your petty prejudices and fears, and see *Joe's Apartment* when it makes its way to video. GMD

Metal Skin Panic Madox-01 AnimEigo

The best compliment which can be awarded to *Madox-01* from AnimEigo is that this movie is good for viewing on a rainy Sunday. Then again, virtually any form of passive entertainment is good for a rainy Sunday. *Madox-01* is fairly light on its violence content; no bloodshed or mangled human body parts which makes it suitable for children, perhaps ages eight and up, and it's even lighter on plot, thus my labeling a film of pure fluff. The action sequences are rather pedestrian and cost-cutting measures are blatant in the panning of still crowd shots. What little plot devices and character development exists is fairly straight forward from the movie's beginning: a sneering, misogynistic conventional tank operator; a beautiful intelligent savvy software programmer and personal battle tank pilot; a naive love-stricken engineering student and his paramour. Diagnosis: this movie is DOA.

Brenda Ainsburg

Mad Bull Tape One AnimEigo

Upon initial screening of this lewd, pungently bawdy cross between *Bachelor Party* and *Raging Bull*, I recoiled in profound disgust at the plethora of gratuitous sex, nudity, graphic violence and vulgar language. The basic premise is good-boy rookie cop meets infamous corrupted veteran cop, but contrary to the superficial evidence all is not as it seems. Despite my initial reaction, a second screening of this film proved that I must grudgingly award it a hearty "thumbs up."

Why the change of heart? Mix a few alternative twenty-somethings whose breadwinning consists of playing grunge, tattooing and professionally piercing human flesh, with copious amounts of micro-brewery beverages and then subject *Mad Bull* to discourse slightly more intelligent but as irreverent as a Ren and Stimpy epic. Suddenly a Beavis and

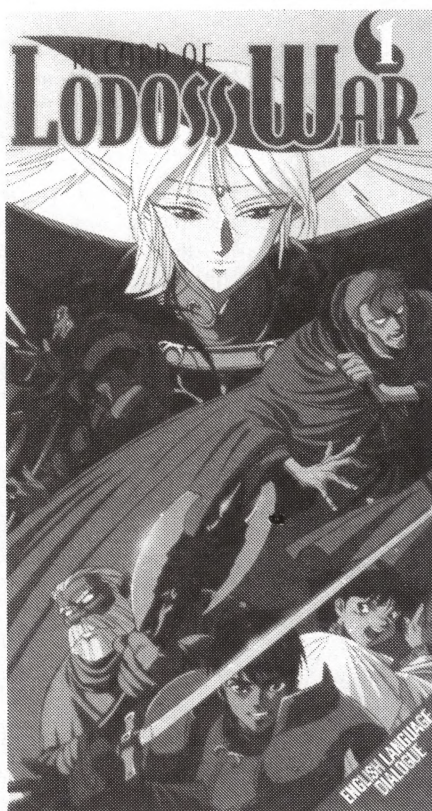
Butthead production metamorphasizes into anime's equivalent of Paul Verhoven collaborating with Woody Allen.

To the sagacious observer classic lower-budget film techniques splatter the screen, but this company takes advantage of its artistic license regarding dubbing and adds wry irreverent thoughts to Diazaburo's dialogue, and voila, ample opportunity for character development and comedic relief. This is a testosterone stuffed, action-packed survey of corporate demands and corruption in our law enforcement hierarchy. It is a blatantly and intentionally bad movie that is perfect for drunken male Generation X-ers and homeboys everywhere. **Brenda Ainsburg**

Record of Lodoss War

Tape 1

U.S. Manga Corps



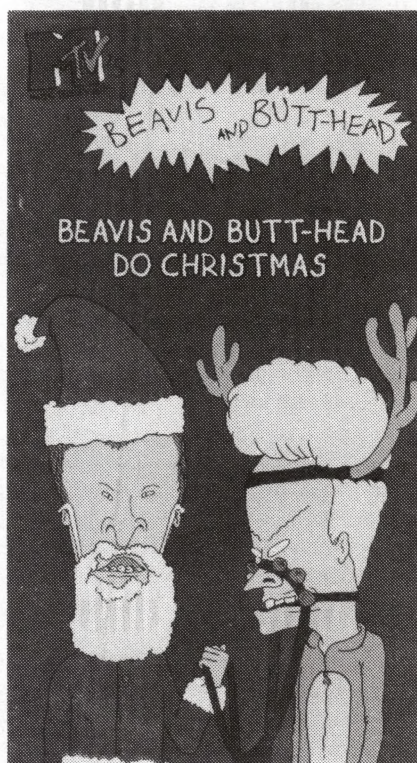
This 1990 made-for-television anime production is a re-packaging of classic sword and sorcery elements; a group of unlikely heroes is headed off on a quest to fight the evil that threatens their home. We have Parn, who is determined to set right again his father's reputation as a knight; Deedlit, a female elf who is not only an experienced fighter, but is the love interest for Parn; Ghim, a battle-hardened dwarf; Etoh, a young priest who is in awe of Slayn, a more experienced magician; and finally the required voice of cynicism and all-around wiseguy, Woodchuck, a thief Parn saves from prison.

What makes these tired old ingredients produce something fresh and involving is the engaging characterizations, the more-than-competent animation, and the sense the film makers truly want to create an epic saga. There seems to be a respect for the material and for the audience, and even potentially cliched situations are handled in a way that avoid the pitfalls of stereotypes. Even more refreshing is that *Record of Lodoss War* can be watched by most members of the family. There is a minimum of bloodshed and no sexually explicit material.

The dubbing is quite acceptable and three installments are presented in the 75-minute tape. There is also a short documentary on the making of the series. **GMD**

Beavis and Butthead Do Christmas

Sony Home Video



© MTV Networks

I have to make two admissions. First, I've grown to like Mike Judge's infantile characters, and second I never thought I'd hear the word "bung-hole" in what was passing as a Christmas special. Two Yuletide episodes with appropriate bumper segments are presented in this collection.

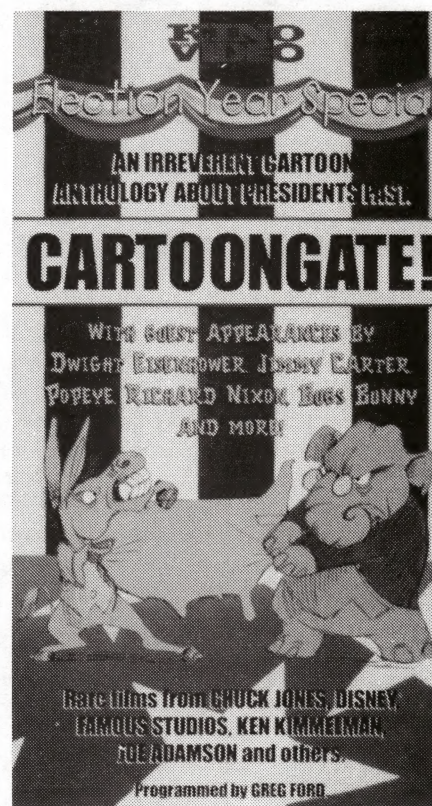
It's a Wonderful Life and *A Christmas Carol* are both given the B&B treatment with fairly predictable results. In the first segment Beavis is visited by the three ghosts of Christmas, but still doesn't get the point, while Butthead sees how the world would be if he had never been born. This latter segment has some very black humor including a plot point in which heavenly powers confer with one another and

conclude that B&B must die!

The bumper segments feature what appear to be real-life Christmas letters to the little wieners. As usual, I don't know if I should laugh or be very frightened. **GMD**

Cartoon Gate

Kino on Video



This compilation produced by animation director Greg Ford is a mixed bag of partisan animated political commercials and propaganda, one theatrical cartoon, and an overly-long political satire. The result is a tape with some material well worth having in any animation collection, but also with plenty of opportunities to hit the fast forward button. The producer was obviously hobbled by having to use mostly material in the public domain.

Hell Bent for Election is undoubtedly the highlight of the collection. This 1944 color short was produced by a group of labor unions to encourage working people to elect Franklin D. Roosevelt to an unprecedented fourth term. The election battle is characterized as a race between a sleek streamlined train with FDR's famous profile and an old fashioned locomotive belching smoke and oil with the year 1929 on its side.

The public is represented by a rail yard worker who is given instructions by his Uncle Sam to make sure the Win the War Special makes it into the station first.

Produced by UPA founder Steve Bosustow and directed by Chuck Jones, the shorts design are highly similar to the "flat" designs which

JPA would make famous in just another few years.

The amazing aspect of the cartoon is the level of vehemence the propaganda takes. In one scene, a character who is clearly a Republican Congressman is transformed into Hitler! For those of us who did not live through World War II, it's easy not to realize that there was considerable discussion in this country about the war, FDR's leadership, and many domestic labor issues. If nothing else seeing his cartoon might make some younger viewers curvy to the library to learn more about this time in American history.

A *Political Cartoon*, on the other hand, will just make them scurry away from the television sets. This long (almost a half-hour) live action/ animated film is a drawn-out satire about a campaign manager engineering the election of a cartoon character to the White House. Written and directed by animation historian Joe Adamson and James Murrow, and Davis Stone, the crudely shot live action footage isn't helped by some simplistic animation. The end scene in which the political consultant turns into a puppet maker for his next candidate underscores the message of the film with a heavy hand.

Ken Kimmelman's *Reaganocchio* is also fairly heavy-handed. Produced early in the Reagan presidency, the short uses Reagan soundbites to illustrate the gap between what Reagan was saying and what was actually happening.

Popeye for President is also included on his tape. The 1956 Famous Studio cartoon is a typical entry of the post-War Popeye shorts.

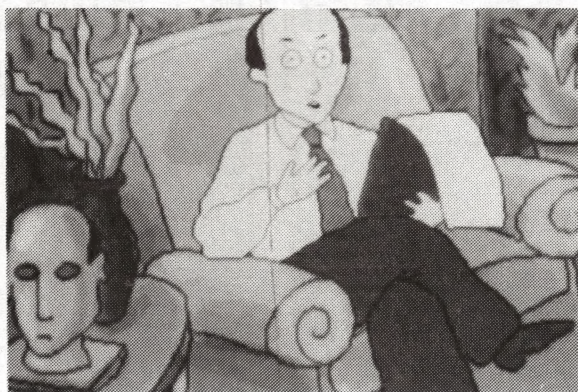
The tape also has several animated campaign commercials, new animation directed by Greg Ford, and a truly mind-boggling public service announcement from 1960 urging people to donate money to the party and candidate of their choice because "your money is as important as your vote!" **GMD**

Dr. Katz

Comedy Central

This "animated" sitcom returns for a second season on cable's Comedy Central with its interesting premise. Comic and writer Jonathan Katz plays a psychiatrist whose patients are all played by fellow comics, including Garry Shandling, Steven Wright, etc. The interplay between Katz and his patients is often quite funny, but the show would work much better as a conventional live action sitcom or even better as a radio comedy.

The show is produced in a computer animation format the producers have cutely named "squigglevision," and the technique is on a technical par with Clutch Cargo's matted-in human lips. It's frustrating to watch as you



The "Squigglevision" series, *Dr. Katz*.

keep hoping for something to move other than the lines which define the characters.

Amazingly enough mainstream entertainment writers have been praising this show, while still making cracks about how *The Simpsons* is simply radio with pictures. Perhaps their idea of quality television is to see a series of almost static images with an accompanying soundtrack. **GMD**

Books

Tex Avery: The MGM Years, 1942-1955

by John Canemaker

Turner Publishing, Inc.



Perhaps more than any other animation director from the "Golden Age," Tex Avery has emerged as a dominant influence on current American animation, and this beautiful art book from Turner Publishing comes at just the right

time to both celebrate Avery's art and examine his legacy.

While the cartoons produced by the Fleischer Brothers, Chuck Jones, Friz Freleng, and Hanna-Barbera have all made their mark on today's animation scene, Avery seems to have been the one director that has been the greatest influence. The exaggerated takes, the barrage of gags, the crashing of the fourth wall, and other Avery hallmarks can be seen in many current productions.

This book assembles artwork from every one of Avery's MGM shorts, plus has a biographical introduction, and a short critical examination of all the shorts. The art is the stunner, here, with cels, storyboards, backgrounds and pencil drawings beautifully reproduced.

The biographical essay by John Canemaker is an eye-opening and depressing sketch of a control-freak whose obsessive devotion to his work ultimately drove away his family and led him to alcoholism. Avery's desire to be in charge of all aspects of his productions and his perfectionism were both openly covered in the landmark book, *Tex Avery: King of Cartoons*

by Joe Adamson (first published in 1975), but the personal destruction that came from these traits has not been widely publicized. Either Adamson was not interested in portraying Avery's personal life or left those elements out of his book out of respect for Avery.

While Avery lived long enough (he died in 1980) to receive some of the admiration from a new generation of animation fans, he would undoubtedly be shocked to see his work make such a mark and to be celebrated in such an opulent book. **GMD**

TELEVISION CARTOON SHOWS

An Illustrated Encyclopedia 1949 through 1993

by Hal Erickson

McFarland & Company

671 pages, \$75.00

That's right - \$75.00! And worth every penny. I like to review books that I've purchased myself, rather than relying on a "comp" copy from a publisher. Not that we don't appreciate occasional "freebies"

Continued on Page 69

IN MEMORY OF FLEISCHER STUDIOS *POPEYE* ANIMATOR GORDON H. SHEEHAN (1910-1996)

By Leonard J. Kohl

Gordon Sheehan, one of the unsung heroes of animation, who worked on some of the greatest *Popeye* and *Superman* cartoons of the 1930's and '40's, along with *Gulliver's Travels* (1939) and *Hoppity Goes To Town* (1941), died quietly at the age of 86 on Friday, September 6, 1996 of a heart attack.

Gordon Holland Sheehan grew up in Mechanicsville, New York, a small town not far from New York City. I know little of his early life. It was only recently that he told me that he had been adopted into a very large family. Gordon had a flair for art, and graduated from the Pratt Institute of New York, hoping to become an illustrator like James Montgomery Flagg or Norman Rockwell. Sheehan graduated and started job hunting in 1933, in the middle of the worst year of the Great Depression. He was unprepared for what he saw. Old established magazines were folding, and there was no work to be had. Luckily, a friend had told him that the Fleischer animation studio was hiring artists. The studio was slightly expanding its staff to work on a new series starring cartoonist Elzie C. Segar's character of *Popeye*. Gordon had no real interest in animation, but he needed the job, and so took the job as an animation cel painter and then inker for fifteen dollars a week, which was, even then, barely enough to live on. Gordon moved to the local YMCA, took small jobs on the side, and stuck with it. He remembered that the man who taught him how to "opaque" cels was fairly new at the studio, a youngster by the name of Jack Mercer, who would become the greatest "voice" of *Popeye*. Gordon was eventually assigned to work for Head Animator (actually a director) Willard Bowsky's animation unit, and by 1934, became an "inbetweenner." Gordon told me that screen credits were not always accurate, such as the classic *Popeye* cartoon, *A Dream Walking* (1935) which was credited to Seymour Kneitel. Sheehan remembers that almost everyone worked on it at some point, because the animation was so intricate, and the film had to meet its deadline. Gordon told me that despite the tendency by historians to call the 1930's the "golden days of animation," Paramount Studios who released the Fleischer cartoons, and owned quite a bit of stock in the studio as well, was merciless with deadlines. While a cartoon might take a few months to produce from start to finish, the goal was that one cartoon had to be finished and be released by the studio every week. Most of the Fleischer cartoon shorts, according to Gordon,



Gordon Sheehan at an animation table at Columbia College in Chicago in 1987. (Courtesy Leonard Kohl)

"were 'batted out' and if an animator's scene was passably entertaining, 'funny,' and moved around well on the screen, it was acceptable. This is a sad but true comment, though it may seem implausible in this enlightened age." Some exceptions to allow a larger budget and more creative time were for the special color "two reelers" like the *Popeye* trilogy, *Popeye Meets Sindbad the Sailor* (1936), *Popeye Meets Ali Baba's Forty Thieves* (1937), *Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp* (1939), and the *Superman* series.

By 1936, Gordon had become a full fledged animator, and came to enjoy the hard work of an animator, particularly on the *Popeye* cartoons. He told me: "Of all the Fleischer cartoon characters, *Popeye* was my favorite. He was fairly easy to draw and he was almost always performing some interesting action on the screen. I enjoyed animating the little sailor more than any cartoon character I ever worked on. I would describe *Popeye* as a likeable, clean-living sort of guy who has very strong feelings about right and wrong. Moreover, being a man of action, he won't hesitate to go to any length to back up these feelings. He could be tough, he could be tender. This to me, made him an appealing character to animate."

Aside from the *Popeye* series, Gordon also

worked on several *Betty Boop* cartoons - his first screen credit appears on *Sally Swing*, one of the later *Bettys* from 1938. Screen credit, then as now, is important. Once Gordon got screen credit, Max Fleischer called him into his office, tore up his old contract, and gave him a new one, with substantial raise. So, I could understand his anger when Gordon told me that his name was not on the credits of *Gulliver's Travels* which was the Fleischer Studio's first feature film, released in 1939. He did a fairly good amount of animation on the film, including Gulliver swimming and then collapsing on the shore of Lilliput, Gulliver talking with Gabby, while whittling a boat, and worked with Grim Natwick on the Princess Glory character. For Gordon Sheehan, that was a disappointment, because Natwick had taken great care in constructing the princess character before the film was completed. Rushing to finish an almost impossible deadline by Paramount, the Fleischer's hired many Miami art students to help animate the film, and the heroine became one of the weakest characters in the film.

Gordon got screen credit on the feature film, *Mr. Bug Goes To Town* (1941) - now known under its re-release title of *Hoppity Goes To Town* - one of the last films produced by the Fleischer studio. After the bitter strike in 1937,

Paramount which released the Fleischer films and owned much stock in the studio, made plans to move the studio to Florida, far away from powerful business unions. However, for a number of reasons, Paramount executives decided to take over the studio, and move it back to New York. Looking at original lobby card publicity for *Mr. Bug...* a.k.a. *Hoppity...* and from what Gordon Sheehan remembered, I firmly believe that Paramount deliberately tried to sabotage the film in order to force a studio takeover. The fact that the film was released the week Pearl Harbor was attacked, and was faced with Walt Disney's *Dumbo* certainly didn't help matters. Yet, Gordon was proud of the work he did on it. He was also proud of the work he had done on several of the *Superman* cartoons from the early 1940's, particularly the first cartoon in the series, where he animated the "man of steel" straightening out a collapsing "skyscraper" building, and battling a mad scientist's melting ray.

Gordon's boss, Willard Bowsky was killed during the famous "Battle of the Bulge" in World War II, and was assigned to work with Dave Tendlar at the renamed Famous Studio. The late Dave Tendlar told me that he enjoyed working with Gordon at the studio, but both men, despite the tight budgets at the Fleischer Studio in the earlier days, found budgets tighter and deadlines shorter. When Gordon was drafted, and ended up working on films for the Navy, he decided at the end of World War II not to return to the studio. (Gordon was proud of one thing he did at Famous for the Paramount newsreels. He and background artist Bob Little produced an animated depiction of how the proposed action, later called *The Battle of D-Day* could be fought. As it turned out, Gordon told me, the proposed attack was pretty close to how the real battle was fought.)

After the War, Gordon worked at Sound Masters, one of the first animation studios that made television commercials in 1946. Animating characters created by Rube Goldberg, two comic policemen *Pepsi* and *Pete* for Pepsi-Cola, Gordon also directed several of these commercial films, among others. For a short time, Gordon ran a small animation studio out in California, and eventually moved to Chicago. Here he worked on several types of commercial cartoons for theaters and television, including commercial "spots" for one of Chicago's greatest mayors, the first Mayor Richard Daley. Gordon eventually directed several films at Chicago's Coronet Films until retiring in 1975. In 1979 he began teaching at Columbia College in Chicago, staying there for over ten years.

I met Gordon Sheehan on a miserably cold night in the middle of November of 1984. Facets Multimedia Center in co-operation with ASIFA/Central (the Midwest Chapter of the International Animation Film Society - English translation) presented a film tribute to animation

director Shamus Culhane. Everyone pretty much seemed to be in awe of Mr. Culhane, the animator who had worked on the classic *Snow White...* and *Pinocchio* for Walt Disney, and had worked for almost every studio boss from Walter Lantz to Max Fleischer, before becoming one himself. I was new to ASIFA/Central, and hardly knew anyone there, and I remember a little elderly man, wearing a blue sport coat, coming up to me and introducing himself. He told me that he was also a member of ASIFA/Central and welcomed me aboard. Almost as an after thought, he mentioned that he was a "colleague" of Shamus Culhane's, and was at one time, an animator at Fleischer Studios. I talked with the man awhile, listened to Mr. Culhane talk about his career and went home. Later, I wondered why the man who was a "colleague" of Culhane's didn't go up in front of the crowd and talk with him about the "golden days of animation." Had I known this person better at the time, I would have known that it was not his style to "butt in" on the guest of honor, even when he had every right to do so. Unlike Shamus Culhane, Gordon Sheehan didn't "toot his own horn" even when he may have wanted to.

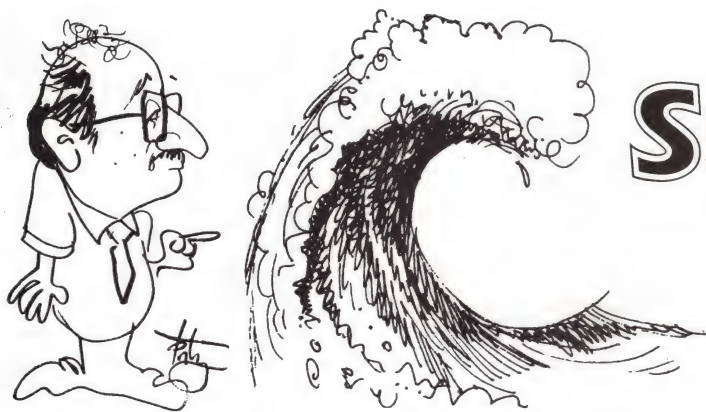
It was almost two years later when I met Gordon Sheehan again. This time, he was one of the celebrities invited to a film collector's show at a Holiday Inn in Hillside, Ill. Gordon had just finished showing a reel from *Gulliver's Travels* and the first Popeye cartoon *Popeye the Sailor* (1933). I told him that I was a freelance cartoonist and writer, and had written for several film periodicals, and asked if I could interview him on his work at the Fleischer Studios, particularly on the early *Popeye* cartoons which were my favorites. He agreed to do so, and then mentioned that he taught some animation classes at Columbia College. I told him that I wanted to take some night classes there after work, and he said he'd send me the information. I shook hands with him, and left, browsing among the film and memorabilia dealers. Back then in 1986, there were no Cash Station machines all over the place, and I suddenly realized the buses to the CTA train station had stopped running. I'd have to take a cab to get there. I had some checks on me, but very little cash. As luck would have it, I bumped into Gordon Sheehan again, and I sheepishly told him my predicament, and without batting an eye, let me write him a check for ten dollars cash to get home. It was a typical gesture of kindness from the man. He generally liked and trusted people, and only once that I know of, did this trust backfire on him. Several years before, he had let a student borrow some of his original Pepsi-Cola animated T.V. commercials from 1946 to study. The student made duplicate copies for Gordon and kept the originals. When Gordon discovered what had happened, the student had moved, and Gordon never was able to get the original films back.

Gordon had been teaching animation classes since 1979 at Columbia College, and I took a number of them. I soon learned in Gordon's class that just because you might be able to draw well didn't make you a good animator. I had no idea just how hard it was to make a character walk properly or have an interesting personality. I am one of those people who are called "pluggers," the slow learners who have to have things pounded into their heads before they learn and understand them. Gordon apparently understood this, and patiently tried to pound as much of his experience into my hard head. We learned animation the "East Coast Style" in that the animation paper is hung from the top "pegs" on an animation tracing table, and Gordon stressed the importance of learning to time your action and getting the proper "smoothness" of the movement of your animation by flipping the drawings back and forth. He grudgingly let students use the "pencil test" method, which is filming your pencil sketches and then developing them as a negative to study on a film projector. Gordon, however, stressed the importance of studying your own work by flipping your own work and carefully studying your drawings. I was amazed to learn that while Disney had been using the pencil test system from almost the beginning of his studio, the Fleischer brothers - Max and Dave - considered it a "crutch" and the process was very seldom ever used, and then sparingly on *Gulliver's Travels* in 1939. Most of the animation until then had been checked over *only* by flipping the animation drawings.

Some of the students considered Gordon to be an animation "dinosaur," and I remember one student in particular who would continually grumble about learning things in the "classic" cartoon style of animation. This student was enamored of the so-called realistic style of Japanese animation, and it wasn't until Gordon showed the first *Superman* cartoon (from 1941) that this student would constantly go to Gordon for help on animating his characters. The only time I ever saw Gordon get angry was when people were talking when he was trying to explain something in class. His feeling was that he was paid to teach us the fundamentals of animation, and if anyone could come up with a better way to teach it, he or she was welcome to put their "two cents" in, but until then, let him do his job.

After I finished taking all the classes that I could afford or take around my work schedule, I kept in touch with Gordon from time to time. When my articles on *Popeye* finally came out in *Classic Images*, I was angered at the editing, the typographical errors (not mine), and the lack of footnotes and additional material - in particular a drawing of *Popeye* that Gordon drew for me - that should have been there, but Gordon was

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Surfin' The Web

by Gene Gumbs

I am amazed when surfing the web the amount of time, energy and enthusiasm that goes into the creation of some of these web pages. In fact, there are a couple that I've included this issue that almost made me change the header to "The Get a Life Report."

That's not to say that these web pages aren't enjoyable - in many cases they are! It just amazes me is all.....

The Unofficial Disney Timeline

(<http://www.islandnet.com/%7Ekpolsson/disnehis.htm>)

This is going to be the most drab site you've ever seen. At the same time, it is loaded with information! Ken Polsson, the creator of this site, spent the better part of a year doing a complete chronology of the Disney empire. And I do mean COMPLETE.

The timeline begins in 1859 with the birth of Walt's father, Elias. Early enough for you? It traces everything that can be found on the family, including times the family moved, schools the children attended, etc.

It gets even more detailed as we get into the twentieth century and begins to chronicle Walt's rise in the entertainment industry. Every short, feature film, training film, and commercial the Disney company ever released is here, including the exact month and day released.

There's also plenty of stuff on the inner

struggles and labor problems that have faced the company through the years. It also traces the birth and growth of all the Disney theme parks.

It's important to remember that this is unofficial, and the Walt Disney Company is in no way connected. Polsson acknowledges that and also is smart enough to give a copyright notice for all the Disney characters.

It ain't the prettiest site around, but there's tons of information and a cool read. Be warned..... if you want to print out the pages, have a ream of paper handy! **CCC of 5**

Animation Nerd's Paradise

(<http://www.2cowherd.net/catseye/anp/>)

I have to say that this is one of the more attractive sites I've seen. The ANP is the home for Michelle Klein-Haas, a staff writer for *Anvil Anthology*, and a former contributor to **ANIMATO!**

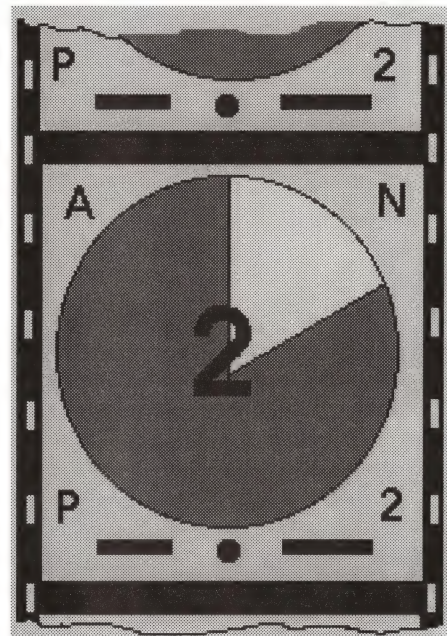
I like this site even more because it was created by Michelle on a Macintosh, my platform of choice. The graphics are well done, and often striking. Included in the site are animation news briefs, with links to the original sources, and some great links to other animation sites.

There is also a bio of Michelle that contains far more than I need to know. There are some well-written, often-insightful movie reviews, but this is also where I had the biggest complaint. The author has a special page dedicated to why she is going to boycott *Space Jam*. It essentially

boils down to her opposition to Warner Brothers exercising their legal copyright privileges and cracking down on web pages that use unauthorized images - many that show the WB characters in compromising positions.

Um, excuse me here, but I have to side on the side of Warner Brothers here, and I

think Michelle misses the point. Wouldn't you be upset if someone took something you owned and used or altered it without your permission?



Don't get me wrong, this is a good site and worth a look. I just wish the owner came off a little less self-important, and kept the pontificating down. 'Course it IS her site, and I guess that's what it's all about. It's just not my cup of tea. **CCC of 5**

International Animated Film Society

(<http://home.earthlink.net/~asifa/index.html>)

If you're into animation you're familiar with ASIFA and may already be a member. If not, check this site out to see the benefits of membership. Their newsletter is online, and there is a worthwhile section to check on ASIFA's animation preservation project. It also has a short section on the Society's annual Annie Awards.

If you are really interested, they have even included an online membership form! Content a little thin, and design rather spartan, but it's functional. **CC of 5**



ASIFA-Hollywood Homepage

The International Animated Film Society
ASIFA-Hollywood
705 South Victory Boulevard
Burbank, California 91502
Tel: (818) 948-0390 Fax: 818-947-5654

The ASIFA-Hollywood homepage is viewed at Animation World Network
http://www.anw.net/asifa_hollywood

Do you love animation?

WHETHER YOU ARE A PROFESSIONAL in the animation industry, a student placing a career in animation, or simply a person who loves animation, you are eligible for membership in the International Animated Film Society: ASIFA-Hollywood.

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Space Jam: An ANiMATO! Review

Space Jam is a mixed blessing...too much Jordan, not enough Bugs

by G. Michael Dobbs

You may not realize it, but *Space Jam* is a very important movie event. No, not because the Warner Brothers characters are finally making their first feature film appearance (I don't count those compilation films of the '70s), and not because Michael Jordan makes the leap from sports to acting. No, *Space Jam* is an important film to the animation business because if it succeeds beyond the expectations of its producers, it will prove that companies other than Disney can make an animated blockbuster.

Let's face it, most non-Disney animated films use their theatrical release as a marketing device to insure some sort of name recognition for the impending home video release. Most G-rated animated features do quite well on video regardless of the film's box-office success or critical history. There is an insatiable hunger in this country for material considered "safe" by parents and the steady stream of harmless mediocre animated features have done well to fulfill this growing market.

The success of *Space Jam* in theaters is a real test. Not since *Bebe's Kids* (an uneven but admirable effort to do something different) has a non-Disney animated feature taken as many chances as *Space Jam*. The film isn't based on a fairy tale, a contemporary children's book, or a TV series. It's based on a sneaker commercial of all things. The live action star is not an actor, but a sports hero. Its animated characters are all beloved and revered, but have not been the subjects of new animation for years. The film breaks out of the G ghetto and includes several slightly off-color jokes to earn a...shudder...PG rating.

Do the chances pay off? Well, yes and no. I was definitely entertained, something I couldn't say about *The Lion King* or *Hunchback of Notre Dame* or any Bluth feature I've seen in the past five years. I wanted...more, though. The film opens with a long (and slow) sequence involving Michael Jordan and ends with a long Jordan sequence. Just what did I pay my money to see? Jordan or the Looney Tunes?

Da Tunes!

The plot is...let's be charitable...

convoluted. Aliens from another world who run an amusement park decide to kidnap all the Warner Brothers characters as their new attractions. The WB folks challenge the little space creatures to a basketball game to decide if they will go willingly to "Moron Mountain", but the aliens tip the scales in their favor by assuming the talents of five top NBA players. In order to even up the teams, the Looney Tunes grab superstar Michael Jordan.

Animation fans could spend the next ten years debating just why Warners wanted to make this story into a movie, however from a marketing point of view *Space Jam* has its strengths. The film makes no effort to compete with Disney in the fairy tale field. It wants to be different. It wants to appeal to adults and teens by presenting them the ever popular Michael Jordan in a way they've never before seen him. The film is designed to be as hip and contemporary as it can be and still capture the traditional family market.

My biggest complaint about *Space Jam* is that too much screen time is given to Michael Jordan. In their quest to grab new audiences, the producers wound up giving more screen time to Jordan than to the animated characters who have been beloved for the better part of fifty years. I wanted more time for the animation, because what I saw was quite good.

It was especially good considering the break-neck production schedule for this film. The end credits say it all; it seems that almost every animation outfit on the planet got an assignment from the *Space Jam* producers, and it shows every now and then on screen. Some of the character do look slightly different from scene to scene. Generally, though, the animation is slick.

The voice work has been the subject of much debate from animation fans as whether or not the new group of voice actors will capture the sound and match the acting ability of the late Mel Blanc. Generally I believe they do, and I want to congratulate Billy West on how well he handled the high-pressure assignment of Bug Bunny. I want remind readers that West and all of the

voice performers were performing to meet the criteria set by the film's director and producers. If a voice didn't sound exactly like Blanc, it's obvious the makers of the film wanted it to sound a different way, and rather than complain about an actor's performance, the criticism should be leveled at the decision boys. It should also be noted that the voices which were traditionally played back at a higher speed (Porky is the big example) were performed and recorded in real time for this film. A special recognition should also go to June Foray, the original voice actress for Granny, who gets her first big screen credit for the role. June never received voice credit on the Warner shorts for her work as Granny, Witch Hazel or other characterizations, and it's long overdue.

Is the film funny? Yes, there are some great lines (several killer animation in-jokes which kid Disney and the Warner Brothers licensing juggernaut) and sight gags, but the animation doesn't get really cooking until the second half of the basketball game sequence. That's a problem for me. The film takes a lot of time establishing who is Michael Jordan (undoubtedly in part to prepare foreign audiences who are unfamiliar with the basketball player) and not enough time setting up the Looney Tunes. We never really learn just how or why they exist, unlike the more carefully-constructed *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. Generally they are used as supporting players for Jordan rather than individual characters. Bugs and Daffy get to shine, but that's about it.

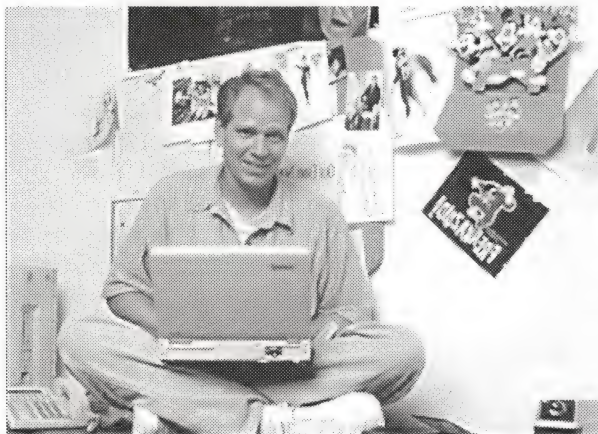
Clearly, the goal of the film makers was to put nearly every character who ever appeared in a Warners cartoon up the screen which gives it a nice nostalgic feel. Some of these characters get to do a little business (Sniffle's scene is pretty funny, for instance), but they don't get to do enough!

Perhaps if *Space Jam* does well enough, the Powers That Be at Warners will have the courage to make another animated feature without having the crutch of basing it on a shoe ad and without putting a non-actor as the film's star. Let's hope so.





Freaking Out With Paul Rugg



by Brett Rogers

Since starting his career in entertainment as a writer for KBC radio in Los Angeles, Paul Rugg has leapt from obscurity to become a powerhouse of talent at Warner Bros. Animation.

Following his stint at KBC in the early 1980s, Rugg joined the "L.A. Connection" acting group, which produced a *Mystery Science Theater 3000*-style television program called *Mad Movies*. In 1989, Rugg moved on to the ACME Comedy Group, where he wrote and performed comedy sketches throughout Southern California.

While with ACME, Rugg was asked to join the writing staff for the Warner Bros. animated series, *Steven Spielberg Presents: Animaniacs*. His lack of experience in animation proved not to be a liability, however, as Rugg's work was so well received that he not only became a Supervising Story Editor on the show, but also a resident voice actor, portraying the roles of minor characters such as Mr. Director, Mrs. Mumfries, Albert Einstein, and others.

As a writer, Rugg has consistently pushed the limits of what one can expect to see on Saturday morning, or in prime time television for that matter. With *Animaniacs*, Rugg has given audiences fast-paced episodes driven by silliness and zany brand of humor, epitomized by one particular segment in which the word "potty" is used 32 times in under six minutes of animation. It is this outlandishness that won Rugg the positions of story editor and writer for the equally fast-paced *Steven Spielberg Presents: Freakazoid!* in 1995.

Early in the production process for

Freakazoid!, a satisfactory voice actor to play the part of *Freakazoid* had not been found after extensive auditions for the role. This led to a very unusual circumstance in which Rugg was called upon to serve in both writing and voice acting roles for the show. As Rugg recalls, "We were under a big deadline and we were just finding ourselves really confused. Whenever we tried to explain the show to somebody we were faced with a really blank stare. People had no idea what we were talking about and we had no idea what to tell them."

Eventually, *Freakazoid!* Producer Tom Ruegger asked Rugg to go into the recording booth to demonstrate what he thought the character's voice should sound like. Rugg describes, "I went in there and did it. Then they played it for Steven [Spielberg] and he said 'Yep. Fine, sure, great.' And then I panicked... and I had to do it."

The result was a hyperactive teen super hero whose personality is a bit of Jerry Lewis, Chris Farley, and Batman, rolled into what is one of the most bizarre central characters in television animation.

Rugg explains, "We were able to experiment and try something really different with *Freakazoid!*. There is no format. Each show you never know what direction we're going to take. I think that a lot of people when they first watch [*Freakazoid!*] are puzzled and say 'What is this about? I don't understand it,' and once they understand it, it's basically about being silly... and not so much about the story, but how we tell the story."

Much of that humorous presentation is achieved through Rugg's frenzied episodes of ad-libbing in recording *Freakazoid's* dialogue. One episode in particular, *Dance of Doom*, was marked by a particularly high-powered and unplanned outburst in the recording booth. As Rugg says, "I kind of went off, and much to my surprise, they animated it." It is that level of creative freedom that has allowed Rugg to accomplish the extraordinary level of energy that carries his segments.

Acting as both a writer and voice actor has presented an interesting dilemma for Rugg.

"You really have to put your ego aside because you write [an episode] as a writer and say to yourself, 'okay, good, I like this, and I hope that actor doesn't ruin this copy,' and I'm talking about myself. Then I get in the recording booth and I go 'who wrote this?' and it was me."

Rugg's debut as the voice of a major animated character has shown what can happen when the energy of a comedy writer is allowed to escape into the recording booth. This dynamism undoubtedly had a hand in winning *Freakazoid!* enough success to warrant a second season on the WB Network, where along with *Animaniacs* we can see more of his voice and written talents at work this Fall.

When not "Freak"-ing out at work, Rugg lives in Woodland Hills, California with his wife Maria and an ugly dog named Petey.

Animation Notes From Turkey

By Ali Oytun Gökhan

In Turkey, animation has a history dating back to the early Forties. Mostly shorts and demo reels, it grew from a desire and interest among illustrators to see their artwork move.

Animation flourished on a small scale until the late Sixties, when television entered the daily lives of Turkish people. As television became popular, so, in hand, did television commercials. As a result, new animation studios and animators appeared to satisfy the demand for more animation-based commercials. But with all this development, animation never had a chance to evolve in the entertainment sector.

After the Eighties, film festivals in Turkey started to screen animated shorts, and the only television station at that time, TRT (Turkish Radio Television Corporation) began showing animated cartoons from independent animation studios. These two factors shifted the studios' emphasis towards entertainment and away from commercial animation. I must add that the quality of these cartoons weren't very good.

In 1990, TRT declared that it wouldn't have any new cartoons made because of a bribery scandal that had occurred. After that, many studios shut down and television animation went into decline. To this day, animators complain about this period in their career.

One year later, (1991) the first animation school began classes at Anatolian University, a big step towards revitalizing animation in Turkey. The early Nineties were also the time

when private television stations appeared along with computer-based animated commercials. This event signaled the rise of computer animation in the commercial sector, much to the dismay of classic animators throughout Turkey. So what did the animators do? They gave some proposals to private television stations which were turned down. As a result, the first cartoon animation association (in Turkey) was created in 1992. It has been called one of the world's "most useless and invisible associations ever created." After all these tribulations, some animators had to work with businessmen who didn't even know animation. Some returned to animation station. Others went to Disney, while the remaining animators had to quit their studio job or work independently in their homes.

Today, producing computer generated commercial animation is much more practical and allows for many opportunities for producers. Even home-based animators are on the rise throughout the world.

In Turkey, there are some computer-based animation houses. There's Telesine which works with professional devices like Silicon Graphics computers and other expensive fancy equipment. They produce computer animation mostly for commercials. They do have a classical animator working with Telesine on future projects. One of which is, I think, a feature film.

Today, besides computer animation, stop-motion animation is on a rise. Anima is the only stop-motion animation studio in Turkey. The company IFR was originally an advertisement company which produced TV commercial film. Later on they opened an animation studio (Anima) to produce stop-motion animation. Anima first started producing films two years ago. Their first stop-motion endeavor was *Show Radio* in which a disassembled old fashioned radio gets assembled. They also created an animated fire sequence in which a man-shaped element is shown walking.

Anima doesn't only make advertisements, they also produce a television series for youngsters. Their future project is to make short movies for children with the ultimate goal to produce the series before February, 1997 when the movie festivals begin.

Production of cartoon animation in Turkey is less expensive than any other country in the Middle East, Europe, or Asia. For this reason, Turkish animation studios produce animation for many foreign countries. Denge is one of the animation houses producing limited animation cartoons for a German-English company. Denge's latest projects are *Max & Molly* and *Albert Said*. Both are 20-25 minutes long television series. Six of *Albert Said* have been produced with 13 more scheduled. Seven of *Max & Molly* are in the can with production ongoing.

"Ella is a cartoon production company

which produces limited animation cartoon films about Islamic history and distributed to neighboring Islamic countries so that Ella can generate capital to finance production of various animation projects which appeal to other countries in the world," says the executive of that company. Ella has produced 11 cartoon films and one puppet animation. *Fatih Sultan Mehmed* is one of their feature films which was produced in a period of one year. The film was produced and sold-out in video format in Middle Eastern countries and the United States. The executive of Ella told me that 10 to 15 thousand videos were sold in America. Unfortunately, Turkish people didn't have a chance to watch it on television or movie theaters. It is not known when it's going to be available to Turkish viewers. The movie is about Fatih Sultan Mehmed, the conqueror of Istanbul. He is a great legendary person of Turkish people and Muslims. The film not only shows how Istanbul was conquered, but also depicts the life of people living in Istanbul during those turbulent times. Ella has another video scheduled for release in the near future. *The Voyage to the Endless*. (Specific details are not available at this time. - PCD)

Artnet is another animation house which produces television series for foreign markets. The owner of the company is a well known animator who produces the cartoon films and also composes the music score. Unfortunately, I didn't have an opportunity to watch their films.

I also want to comment on student work being done at Anatolian University. The Department of Animation belongs to the Faculty of Fine Arts, which offers a four year education. All students have individual PC's at their computer labs. The students' animation films were better than I expected. Almost all films were, naturally, shorts. This year's graduation project centered on demo commercials for MTV. All animation techniques were used.

In addition to the MTV demos, some really good clay animation films were showcased. My personal favorite was about a man having surgery performed by robots. The only bothering part was that the sound effects of the robots, in time, became too monotone. Overall it was good animation.

As you've surmised, animation is still trying to establish itself in Turkey, which in my opinion, has come a long way from earlier setbacks. Because of economical reasons animation has not yet reached it's peak in this country. Also, animators have a hard time getting along with each other, which means they can't work in groups. It has much to do with socio-cultural factors in Turkey. Here in Turkey, in any work, you cannot observe natural group leaders, because people here see everyone as socially equal. Animators here have to know a lot and do a lot in a short period of time. For this

reason, I see a bright future for Turkish animation, if things go correctly and animators continue improving and working together.

I must mention that the future of this segment was in the hand of a few animators and this is now changing. The quality of the animation done in Turkey is not perfect, but good enough.

Only a handful of animators are doing classic animation. Of these, half have left for Disney. Others don't even have a specific education in animation, though the number of educated animators is increasing thanks to the Animation department at Anatolian University.

Voices on The Road

by Linda Tindall

Ask a voice actor how their life differs from an on-camera actor and over and over one hears the same basic response, "Our fans don't recognize our faces." Maurice "Moe" LaMarche (*The Brain on Pinky and The Brain*) commented on his anonymity by saying, "Sometimes it's a blessing because I can sit in any restaurant in L.A. and eat in peace; but on the other hand there are times I want to say to people, 'Oh! By the way, I'm The Brain.'"

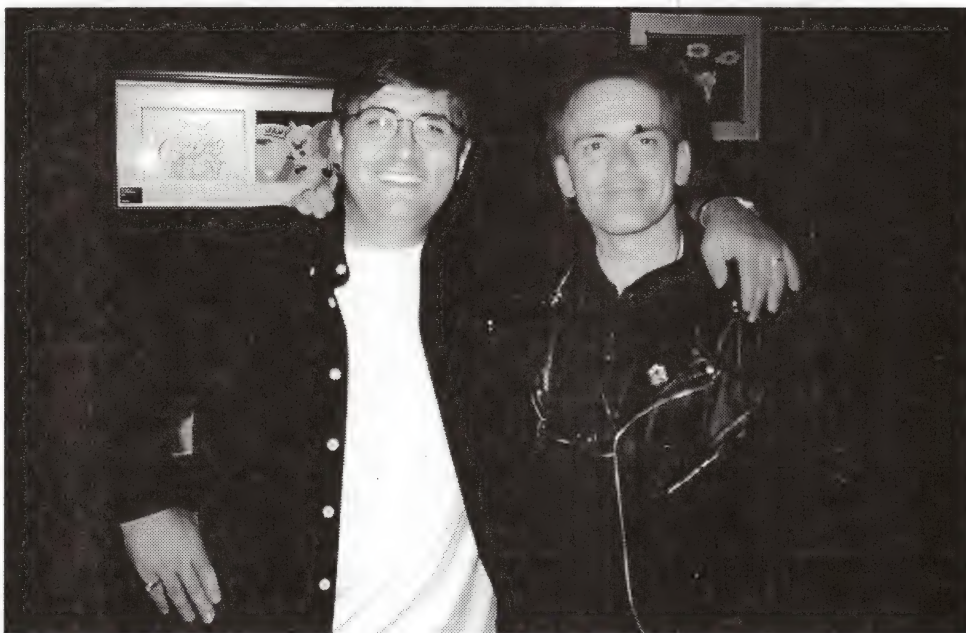
To the delight of animation fans, Warner Bros. is doing something new. It hosts nationwide tours of the voice artists to meet fans and sign autographs. First up were the voices of *Steven Spielberg Presents the Animaniacs* (Rob Paulsen, Tress MacNeille and Jess Harnell). Recently Maurice LaMarche got to join in the fun too when he and Rob Paulsen (the voice of Pinky) went on the *Steven Spielberg Presents Pinky and The Brain* voice tour.

"What better business is there to be in than one where people actually line up to tell you, 'I like what you do.'"

LaMarche said. "The fans for our show are among the most intellectual, kindest and certainly very best behaved. I couldn't have been better treated by everyone, but I have to tell you about one very special fan.

"He's a very, very nice young man named Major Ward. He lives in New York and I first met him because he was a fan of *The Critic* (LaMarche was the voice of Jeremy, among many others on the show). Major has leukemia. He asked the Star Light Foundation to help him meet the creators of *The Critic*. Arrangements were made for him to have lunch on the lot at Sony. I was asked, along with Jon Lovitz (the voice of Jay Sherman) to attend. Jon wasn't able to go, but he recorded a nice message for him. They gave Major a cel from the show too.

"I got to know Major that day and we have stayed in touch. He's a wonderful example of courage. He's sixteen going on 30. He lives with his two sisters because his parents unfortunately died a few years back. He's so unselfish it's amazing. When we talk he doesn't want to talk about himself, he actually asks me about me and my wife and my son.



Maurice LaMarche (L) and Rob Paulsen at a recent signing.

"When *The Pinky and The Brain* voice tour was in New York City last spring, it was on my birthday, and Major Ward and his sisters came down to surprise me. Afterwards we all

went out for a birthday dinner. Major and his family, my wife Robin and my son Jonathan, Billy West (*Ren and Stimpy*, and Bugs Bunny in *Space Jam*) his wife Vee, and Mary Lynn Blanks

(*All My Children*) and her family. We had a wonderful time.

"Major is an excellent artist and he drew some of his cartoons for me. I just know he is going to get well and grow up and get into the animation business. He really has an artistic gift."

Rob Paulsen knows about anonymity too. Rob, an avid hockey fan, plays charity games with the Celebrity All-Star Team. After the games, when the on-camera actors are being mobbed by fans, he usually goes unrecognized. However, he reveals his identity by surprising children with a "Narf," "Zort" or "Poit."

On the voice tours, one of Rob's pleasures is to talk to other hockey fans. Growing up in Detroit, his favorite team was the Red Wings and on the day the voice tour was in Santa Clara, Ca., he was wearing a Red Wings t-shirt. Fans who have heard about his obsession often bring him gifts of Red Wing memorabilia.

Another group of special fans, are those who have first met Rob and Moe on the Internet. When they show up at the voice tours, they introduce themselves by their "screen names" as well as their real names. "At last!" says The Brain, "A face to go with the e-mail!" Both Rob and Moe have their own message boards, created by their fans, on Toon Talk on America Online.

One of the first Internet posts from Moe was a reply on the topic of his co-star Rob, and the positive reaction from fans after meeting him: "Let me just say that I totally agree with this thread - Rob Paulsen is, indeed soooooooo funny, and I'm the luckiest guy in showbiz, because I get to work with him every week!" About the tour he says, "Any moment spent with Rob Paulsen is the funniest moment on the tour. He's just amazingly funny and quick and delightful and we just have a great time."

While he appreciates the fan attention, he is saddened that *Pinky and The Brain* is no longer in prime time, "I speak for both Rob and I and everybody of the writing staff and production staff of the show, we appreciate your support; and write Warner Bros. Network and tell them you want *Pinky and The Brain* back on prime time. I think we've got the stuff to do what *The Simpsons* did. That is, be an animation force on prime time. I think there's room in prime time for more than *The Simpsons* and reruns of *The Critic* and *Dr. Katz*. The producers and staff are working on a prime time version of the show that the people of the WB will be happy with. It's the best gig I've ever had in animation and I hope it goes on for a long, long time."



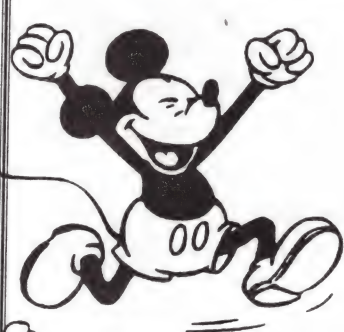
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Tons of Notes



by Andrew Osmond

Friends of the charming and tolerant Don Wildmon (see Patrick Duquette's column last issue) should direct his attention to a cautionary tale in the Brit magazine *Private Eye*. In July, the Internet Service Providers Association were sent a letter from Inspector Stephen French of Charing Cross, London, fulminating against the obscenity sweeping cyberspace. Among the unsavoury sites which French condemned - inadvertently giving the full net addresses - was an intriguing-sounding entry called *Pictures, Erotica, Disney*. Needless to say, the letter was rushed round the globe to millions of eager surfers, none of whom had known where to find such material.

Moving swiftly on, the more congenial Cosgrove-Hall has announced yet another production (do these people sleep?). When I mention Ray Harryhausen you'll know it's big... yes, Ray is back as creative consultant on a series based on Homer's *Odyssey*. Like the *Discworld* series, the show combines stop-motion and computer animation (how else would you animate sea?). *Odysseus - The Legend* consists of a 75-minute TV film, followed by 26 half-hours episodes, all scripted by Rosemary Anne Sisson (*The Black Cauldron*, *Young Indiana Jones*). The co-producer is Carrington Pictures International, also collaborating with CH on *Lavender Castle*, an SF show produced by Gerry Anderson. If the name sounds familiar, it should: Anderson was the puppet maestro responsible for *Thunderbirds*, *Stingray*, *Space Precinct* et al.

As for *Discworld*, the series has been given a provisional transmission date of Spring '97. The story will be a manic cross between two well-known Elizabethan plays, with dialogue along the lines of, "When shall we three meet again?" "Well, I can do Tuesday." For those who really want to know, the CGI effects were created on a Silicon Graphics Onyx InfiniteReality System, the fastest graphics supercomputer in the world. By the way, Cambridge's own Animo system continues to be a sell-out hit, with Dreamworks alone purchasing a hundred systems.

Moving to another Brit monolith, Nick Park has announced plans for his first full-length feature. As previously suggested, this will be co-produced with independent US producer Jake Eberts, owner of Allied Film-Makers. In Park's words, "We never felt comfortable with previous deals, which is why we're working with Eberts. We've done everything to guarantee independence. We may look to Hollywood for help if we're stuck on the script, but the partnership means we can link up with a US studio for marketing and distribution at a later stage."

Park continued, "Like *Toy Story*, the film depends on ideas, stories and the skill of making a gag work. We have the potential to be as big as *Toy Story*. . . There's a British sensibility to my films, and if I went to the US and started working with American crews, my style would change." Indeed, Park's idiosyncratic approach continues to pay dividends around the globe. His latest conquest is Hong Kong, where a tailored selection of Aardman films, headed by Wallace and Gromit, earned more than a million dollars. Back home, Aardman's projects include a series called *Rex the Runt* about a plasticine dog, and an eleven-minute film called *Wat's Pig*. The latter is a split-screen comedy directed by Peter Lord, the creator of the charming shorts *Adam* and *War Story*.

Following last issue's piece on Welsh animation, more titles have been announced in the religious *Testament* series. These include stunning-looking versions of the *Elijah* and *Moses* stories, and a feature-length animation of the life of Christ. According to the press-release, the latter film "combines model, drawn and computer animation, brought together using state-of-the-art post production." *Testament's* successors include *Literary Classics*, featuring versions of *Beowulf* and *Canterbury Tales*; *World Faiths*, which adapts Hindu, Buddhist and Muslim stories; and *Classic Tales*, which retells myths from North America, China and the Caribbean. The co-ordinating producer is not 54C, as misprinted last issue, but S4C (Channel 4 Wales), Chris Grace, S4C's animation director, recently claimed, "The

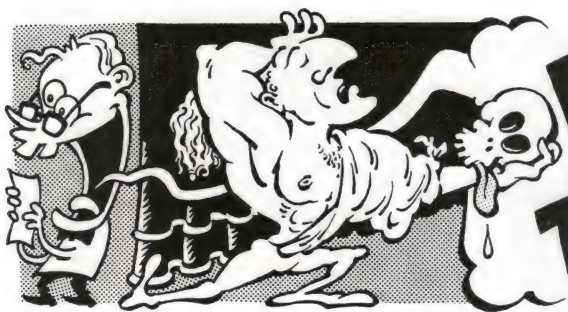
Auteur Series (the umbrella title for S4C's literary animations) altered the Disneyfied perceptions of animation, addressing a national challenge - the loss of cultural memory." Watch this space. . .

On a more miscellaneous note, the Bolex Brothers (Issue 31) have reportedly completed their next production; *Bob's Birthday*, a '94 Oscar-winner, may become a Channel 4 series: Hibbert Ralph Entertainment has won a string of awards for its short *Forgotten Toys*; new shorts include the 3D landscape animation *Wheel of Life* and the CGI *The Wrong Brothers*; and Disney screened development work from *Hercules* and *Mulan* at Cardiff's animation festival. The festival also saw the European premiere of *Freleng Frame by Frame*, a two-hour interview with the animation giant. On a lighter note, fans of British comedy may remember *Splitting Image*, a merciless puppet caricature show which spawned imitators from Moscow to Tokyo. The company has now joined forces with Hearst Animation to create a model version of the classic *Krazy Kat*.

And finally, two of *Splitting Image's* ex-puppeteers have made the headlines in a heartwarming success story. Several years ago, David Stoten and Tim Watts collaborated on a 96-second £70,000 short called *The Big Story*, a Billy Wilder spoof starring a plasticine Kirk Douglas. The film went on the festival circuit, where it was spotted by one Quentin Tarantino (yes, that Tarantino). The cult director was so impressed by the short that he used it to support *Pulp Fiction* in Britain cinema, automatically multiplying its audience by a factor of several million.

Result: Stoten and Watts have now been commissioned to make two cartoons for Walt Disney, with a budget of \$20 million. One can only hope they never fall foul of Don Wildmon...





FACES BEHIND THE VOICES!

Mark Lungo speaks to two of the voice actors from *Captain Simian* and the *Space Monkeys*

JEFF BENNETT: "I HATE MY LIFE"...NOT!

This prominent voice actor truly enjoys his work. Hard to believe, eh?

Jeff Bennett (also known as Jeff Glen Bennett), the voice of Orbitron on *Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys*, is a rising star in TV animation voice acting. He entered the field in the early 1990's and soon rose to the level of prominence enjoyed by voice actors like Jim Cummings and Tress MacNeille (among others), all of whom he now works with regularly. He's starred on such shows as *Bonkers* (as Jitters A. Dog, originator of the catchphrase "I hate my life!"), *Gargoyles* (Brooklyn, the Magus), *Phantom 2040* (Maxwell Madison Sr. and Jr.), and *Skeleton Warriors* (Prince Lightstar). He's also done guest roles on *Aladdin*, *Animaniacs*, *Biker Mice from Mars*, *Monster Mania* and *Pinky and the Brain*, among other series. He was the singing voice of the Richard Dreyfuss character in *James and the Giant Peach*. To top it all off, Bennett is also the announcer for the Kids' WB! network.

Texan Bennett started acting with the Houston Shakespeare Festival. He then spent six years with the respected Alley Theater while doing other assignments on the side. "I did some voiceover work there, just commercial stuff," he recalls. In 1989, Bennett moved to Los Angeles. "When I came out here, I was beating my head up against the wall to do TV and movies, like every other chump in town is trying to do." (During that last phrase, Bennett gave a spontaneous demonstration of his talents by shifting into a "dese and dose" gangster/thug voice.)

When Bennett made a voiceover demo tape, the engineer who made the demo recommended him to Sutton, Barth & Bennari, an agency that was searching for an actor who could do a wide range of voices. "It was kind of like *The Dating Agent Connection*," Bennett says. "Then I started auditioning for things—and getting them. Since there's only, for the most part, four of five [voice] directors in town who do everything for cartoons, they get word fast of new people that they like. One director will use you and say, 'I really liked using Jeff,'



or Maurice La Marche or somebody, and [another director] will say 'Maybe I'll use him on this project, too.'"

Bennett's first animated role was Lord Mulden, a recurring villain on *Prince Valiant*: the character was originally meant for Frank Langella, who backed out. ("[Voice director] Stu Rosen called me up and said, 'Can you do something Langella-like?'"") Then Bennett was cast for two roles on *James Bond Jr.* (IQ, young James' inventive sidekick, and the villainous Knick Knack), and the rest is animation history.

On *Captain Simian*, Bennett plays one of his most unusual roles: Orbitron, a floating mechanical orb given to the Space Monkeys by the same mysterious aliens who made them intelligent. Orbitron is supposed to possess all the knowledge of the universe, but it irritates Simian and company with its sarcasm and superior attitude. Things go from bad to worse when Gor accidentally damages Orbitron, causing the device to speak in bizarre non sequiturs as well as insults. "If [Orbitron] worked correctly, he'd be the Spock of the ship and

know everything, but since he's currently in malfunction mode, he just comes in and 'Tourettes' every once in a while," Bennett says. "he's always making fun of something. He's not really the nicest orb in the world, no matter how you look at it."

Although Bennett auditioned for other roles on *Captain Simian*, Gordon Bressack cast him as Orbitron because he thought Bennett's "John Cleese" voice fit the character. Bennett had previously done two other Cleese-like voices, the narrator of *Earthworm Jim* and *Freakazoid!* co-star Lord Bravery. "[Bressack] knew that I did the John Cleese thing, and he had mentioned

Earthworm Jim as being the thing that made him think about that," Bennett says. Bennett and Maurice La Marche also play the HoloBoons and many other small roles on *Simian*.

Aside from *Simian*, Bennett has been busy during the 1996 season. He has starring roles on two of this year's other animal crime fighter series, Disney's *Mighty Ducks* (Duke L'Orange) and Warner Bros.' *Road Rovers* (Blitz); he continues on the newly retitled *Gargoyles: The Goliath Chronicles*; and his guest star work includes *Quack Pack*, *Superman* and *Jonny Quest: The Real Adventures*.

Bennett says that sometimes he and his fellow voice actors socialize after work, "although probably not as much as a lot of people would think. A lot of times you're tired from the whole day; a lot of times it's 6:00 or 6:30 by the time we finish." Still, there's time enough for some activities: "We hang out and

Continued on Page 68

JERRY DOYLE: STILL SPACEY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

The co-star of Babylon 5 accepts a new space mission on Captain Simian

Jerry Doyle holds what is probably a rare position in TV history: he's simultaneously starring on two science fiction series, one live action and one animated. And loving it. "I'm blessed to be in the position that I'm in," he says. "To be an actor and have one job is great. To have two is outstanding."

Doyle has an unusual history for a prominent actor: instead of working his way up through the entertainment industry, he was a Wall Street stockbroker until a few years ago. He became bored with the world of high finance and decided that "When you're not happy doing what you're doing and getting paid for what you're doing, then you've got to find something to do that's fun." Doyle chose to pursue a career in acting, which he describes as "the giant land of make believe, where you can have a lot of fun—wear someone else's clothes, say someone else's lines, stand on someone else's steps, and if you screw up, you get to do it again. It's a pretty nice job when you think about it."

Armed with little more than chutzpa, raw talent and an uncanny resemblance to Bruce Willis, Doyle managed to attract the attention of the

producers of *Babylon 5*, an ambitious science fiction series created by writer J. Michael Straczynski (who worked on animated shows such as *He-Man* and *The Real Ghostbusters* throughout the mid-1980's). Doyle became a fan favorite for his multifaceted portrayal of Michael Garibaldi, security chief of the 23rd century space station Babylon 5, a cynical but likable wisecracker who defends B5 from a variety of human and alien threats.

While Doyle continued on *B5* (which is currently in its fourth season), he also looked for voiceover work. After narrating several commercials, Doyle found himself auditioning for the title role of *Captain Simian*. "I saw him as kind of like the reluctant hero, so I did my combination of Captain Kirk and Cliff Claven from *Cheers*, and I kind of came up with a Captain Cliff. There's a lot of good humor that takes place because of [Simian's] attempt to try and be a captain, not knowing what one is."

Like *B5*'s Straczynski, *Captain Simian* creator Gordon Bressack is a veteran TV writer who is finally making the pet project he'd been trying to sell for years, and is trying to produce a quality series on a moderate budget. Doyle respects both

men; "Gordon is doing the yeoman's work on [Simian], just like Joe [Straczynski] is doing it on *Babylon 5*. To come up with 22 or 26 episodes and to make them move, and make sense, and make you care, and entertain [you], is a tough job that they both do well."

Like his co-star Jeff Bennett, Doyle enjoys the recording sessions for *Captain Simian*. "We go into the booth, and we spend two or three hours working on an episode, and it's great fun." Doyle believes that viewers of all ages will like watching *Simian* as much as he liked working on the show. "What's fun about the show is that if you watch it as an adult, you'll pick up on things that the kids won't. There's tongue-in-cheek, there's spoof, there's humor that relates to other shows and movies that people have done."

Doyle notes that *Captain Simian* already has one young fan: his own son. "The first time he saw it he came running into the kitchen and said, 'Daddy, Daddy, you've got hands on your feet!' He thought it was just a hoot the way the characters swing around." Doyle himself sums up *Captain Simian* this way: "It's fun to be working, and it's fun to be working on a fun show."



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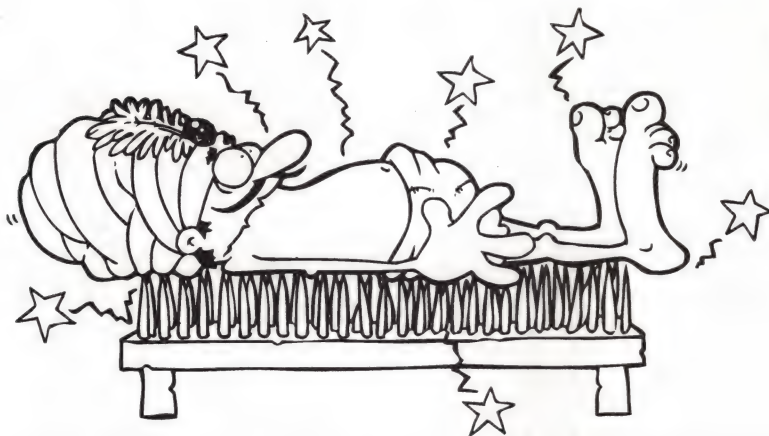
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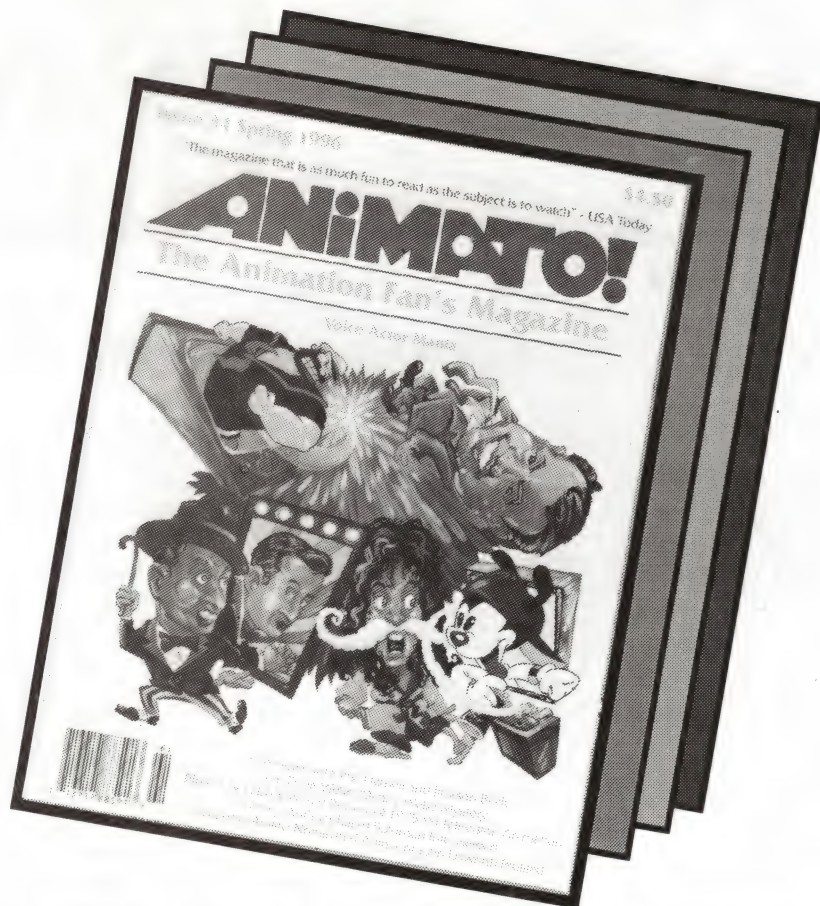
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Trailers in Trouble:

A rare coming attractions reel needs your help

by Jere Guldin

Coming attractions trailers have been a fixture in movie houses ever since the silent film days. For animated films, however, the first trailer didn't appear until well after the demise of the silents, in 1937 for Disney's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*. Ever since that time, virtually every release of an animated feature has been preceded into theaters by one or more preview trailers. Those Disney features reissued numerous times have had so many different trailers made for them over the years that a few have been lost, and these desperately are being sought.

Few short subjects ever have had preview trailers heralding their release, although there have been exceptions. With theatrical cartoons in short supply nowadays, those shorts that make it into movie houses are likely to receive as much ballyhoo as the features they accompany, as with the *Roger Rabbit* cartoons in recent years. Promotion of this sort extends back at least to the mid-1960's, when Disney's *Winnie the Pooh* featurettes shared billing with the studio's live-action feature releases.

Prior to that time, the few trailers for short subjects mostly were generic, ranging from tags sporting legends such as *Also selected short subjects* to promos for cartoon carnivals, matinees, and the like. These rarely ran longer than a few seconds, and often were made specifically for—and even by—the theater running the program. Generic trailers occasionally were produced by the studios themselves to promote their own product. These remained simple announcements that next week one might catch the latest Mickey Mouse or Silly Symphony release, as in some promos by Disney in 1930, or a similar Bugs Bunny trailer done in Technicolor by Warner Bros. in the 1940s.

But of trailers for single cartoons from any era not released in accompaniment of a specific feature film, it is possible there is only one, and that is the *Superman* trailer. As is well known to most vintage cartoon fans, Paramount Pictures placed a good deal of promotional muscle behind

the first installment of Fleischer's *Superman* series. Production costs were the highest for any cartoon to date, and Paramount's publicity campaign meant to capitalize on that, as well as protect its investment. In doing so, it paid for a theatrical coming attractions trailer to whet audience appetite for the premiere release in the upcoming series. For the past fifty years, such a trailer generally wasn't known even to have existed.

At less than thirty seconds (eighteen, to be exact), it would be what today is commonly referred to as a "teaser" trailer. But even though little of the cartoon is glimpsed during the preview, what's there certainly is enough to sell the picture to an audience. Beginning with a portion of the pre-title sequence to the series, it depicts the fireball bursting into a full-length pose of Superman, followed by an excerpt from the first cartoon, with Superman battling the electric ray, and concluding with the shot from the opening titles of the Man of Steel streaking across the sky with the word "Superman" emblazoned across the screen. Superimposed titles sport legends such as *Follow his thrilling career on the screen of this theatre!*

From surviving materials, it's easy to trace how the trailer was generated. A positive master was made of selected sections from the original Technicolor successive exposure negative of the premiere series entry. The excerpts included the pre-titles action (Faster than a speeding bullet . . . etc.), the opening credits, and a few shots of Superman fighting the ray. The master then was duped to negative, and the trailer cut together from that. A music and effects track was mixed, and overlay titles were made to be superimposed onto each color release print after the Technicolor dye transfer printing had been completed.

The negative for the trailer remains in very good condition, although there are minor blemishes on it, probably sustained while printing copies back in 1941. Undoubtedly, most of these defects can be removed with modern printing methods—if the trailer ever were to be preserved. The cost for doing so is approximately four hundred dollars, not that

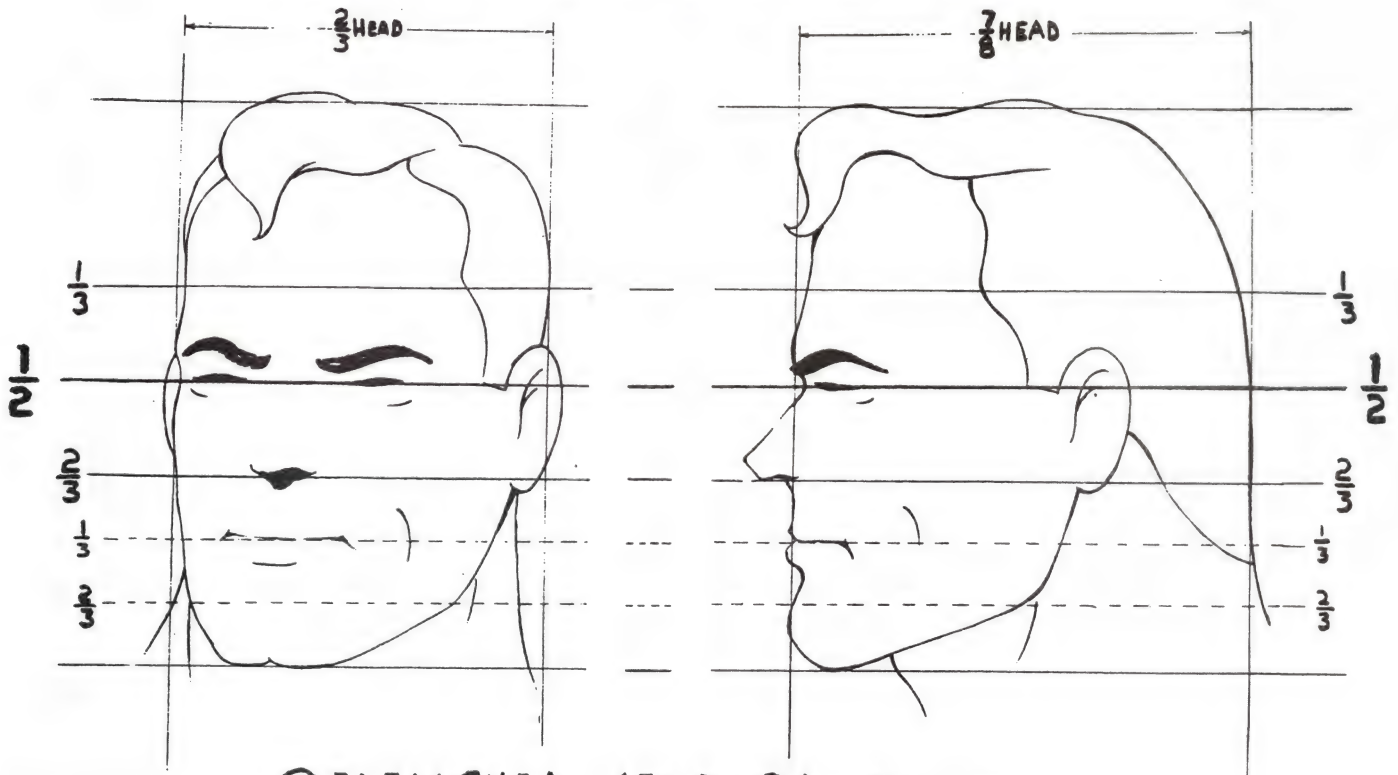
much, actually, but a hefty price for only eighteen seconds of screen time. That's because preserving films from Technicolor negatives is incredibly costly, averaging seven dollars per release print foot. The results, however, can be breathtaking, far surpassing the cheaper method—used altogether too frequently—of simply making a dupe negative from a color print.

If the *Superman* trailer remains unique in nitrate, thankfully that isn't the case for the cartoons themselves. For many years, these were available only in dupe, poor color 16mm prints, or on inferior videotapes transferred from them. Certainly they hadn't been seen in 35mm since the 1940s. But Warner Bros., the current owners of the series (acquired in the Time-Warner merger that included D.C. Comics, owners of the Superman character, which gained control of the cartoons when Paramount's rights expired), made new 35mm color prints for exhibition in the mid-'80s. At the time, these proved a revelation on the big screen, and were enthusiastically received when later released to videotape and disc.

Yet it turns out that the *Superman* series wasn't preserved quite as well as it might have been. Few studios lavish the same time and money safeguarding their short subjects as they do their feature films. Thankfully, Warner Bros. doesn't follow this lead. In recent years, the company has been preserving its Technicolor cartoons (from 1948 onward; Turner currently owns the rights to most of the pre-1948 cartoons) from the original nitrate negatives at top-quality labs, such as YCM, ensuring the job is performed well and properly.

Unfortunately, that wasn't done with the *Superman* cartoons. Ten years ago, film preservation still wasn't a high priority at most studios. "Asset protection" (the studios' term for preservation) was done only when absolutely necessary, all-too-often at cut-rate labs for bargain prices. The *Superman* cartoons were copied from the nitrate negatives to safety film while this way of thinking still prevailed. And, while a good enough job was done on them, it was—and is—possible to have done better.

SUPERMAN



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Details of a Superman model sheet (courtesy of Hy Neigher)

This was confirmed at a Famous Studios retrospective held last year at the Museum of Modern Art, where several Superman cartoons were screened alongside original Technicolor nitrate prints and newly-struck copies of other Famous Studios subjects. When seen alone, the Superman cartoons look perfectly acceptable. But when viewed against better-quality prints, struck more recently, they suffer by comparison, lacking in sharpness and color saturation, with somewhat muddy sound.

It would be possible today to upgrade preservation of the Superman series. But, with the cost for preserving just the trailer at four hundred dollars, all seventeen cartoons would total a price tag more than two hundred times that amount. And even if a source could be found to provide five thousand dollars per preserved cartoon, not all of them can be upgraded any longer.

That's because the original negatives no longer exist for all of them. The picture negative to the first series entry, titled simply *Superman*, decomposed just a few years ago. Although Warners does hold safety printing materials on that title and fifteen others, there remains only a nitrate picture negative for *Terror on the Midway*, the ninth of the Supermans, and the last Fleischer cartoon to be released by

Paramount. No soundtrack exists in 35mm for *Midway*, which may be the reason why no safety materials were generated for this cartoon, Warner Bros. reasoning that the expense wouldn't be justified by the poor quality sound that would have to be obtained from 16mm prints. The authorized video release of the Superman cartoons includes *Terror on the Midway*, lifting the opening from 35mm materials on one of the other subjects, then shifting to 16mm for both picture and sound for the balance of the subject, with a marked decrease in quality.

Although not one of the best in the series, the existence of *Terror on the Midway* on safety film only in lower grade 16mm makes its preservation a priority. That priority holds for the trailer, as well—and for the entire series, if the money were available to upgrade the complete run.

As a whole, the Paramount Superman cartoons rank among the best animated subjects ever made, with a few individual entries, such as *The Bulleteers*, standing out as nearly perfect examples of the medium. They deserve to be seen at their best. If financial support for them someday can be found, most—although never again all—finally will be available that way.




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Newbies at Nickelodeon

The Cable Network Launches Two New Animated Shows in Primetime



by G. Michael Dobbs

A kid with a football-shaped head and animated kids' action figures with scuffed-up bodies and melted faces? You know this isn't Saturday morning, folks. Animation fans have grown to expect at least one new animated series each fall from Nickelodeon, but this year there will be two new series and they'll be in primetime.

Continuing their commitment to quality and quirky animated programming, the cable network premiered *Hey Arnold!* on October 7 and *KABLAM!* on October 11. *Hey Arnold!* will be seen Monday and Wednesday at 8:00 p.m. and *KABLAM!* will air every Friday at 8:00 p.m.

Hey Arnold!



If *Rugrats* addressed the unseen concerns of babies, and *Doug* looked at the angst of the suburban pre-teen, then *Hey Arnold!* squarely corners the urban fourth-grader demographic. While *Hey Arnold!* may continue the *Doug* tradition of

exploring the not-so-little complexities of growing up, the show certainly has its own very distinctive style of doing it.

And that's exactly the way of *Hey Arnold!* creator Craig Barlett wants it. Barlett is interested in producing a funny animated series, but also insists the show has something more than just humor as its focus.

"This kid who really feels something. It gives me something to latch onto to and make sure that's what it's about. There's a lot of cartoon shows that's about wacky drawings and outrageous situations and we try to be entertaining in that way, try to be visually entertaining in the design of the characters and the design of the world he lives in. We make sure it's a cartoon, but it turns out it's about emotions and feelings. I'm really glad about that because it really gives you something to write," Barlett explained.

Barlett is enthusiastic about the show and its potential to mix a perceptive examination of childhood with fantasy.

Arnold lives with his grandparents who have a boarding house in an inner city neighborhood. Arnold's best friend is Gerald, and his biggest problem is Helga, a girl who secretly loves Arnold and shows her devotion by routinely torturing him. Arnold's life is filled with the stuff of childhood...pick-up games, school plays, homework, and inexplicable adults.

Arnold's edge, though, is his room. When Arnold steps into his room, he enters a place that will be the envy of every kid in America. Barlett describes it as a "Batcave" with gadgets and hide-away furniture.

"To the younger half of our Nickelodeon audience Arnold's inner life, that kind of fantasy, his own little inner sanctum he has up, there is really going to be important. For the older half of our audience, fourth, fifth sixth grade, they're going to care about those relationships. Helga...she loves him yet she hates him. The constant threat of love or violence that's going on all the time. I think that's the thing that will appeal to the older kids," said Barlett.

"The nice thing about the series is we had more time to stretch out and breathe," Barlett continued. "Music drives the series. Whole episodes are devoted to something that's happened; Arnold's feeling bad and he thinks about it. He goes up to that room and lays on the power couch and listens, and I really like that."

Hey Arnold! may be thoughtful and introspective, but viewers shouldn't expect a cartoon version of an Ingmar Bergman film.

Barlett's show is also a hoot!

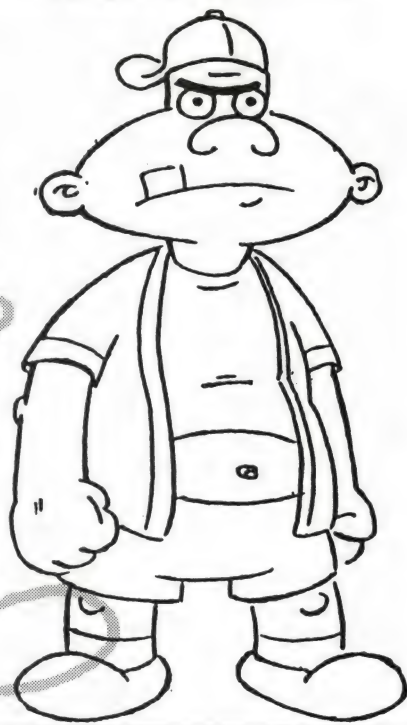
Fifty-two 11-minute episodes of *Hey Arnold!* have been ordered by the cable network to make up a first season of 26 half-hour shows. Nickelodeon will air two new shows every week.

Although no stranger to animation, this is Barlett's first series. Barlett started his career as an animator with Will Vinton Productions and working as a stop motion animator in clay. He fondly remembers his six years there as a "film making apprenticeship," because he learned all of the aspects of production, not just animation.

After leaving Vinton in 1987, Barlett worked on the second and third season of *Pee*



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Wee's Playhouse producing the *Penny* cartoons. The *Penny* shorts were clay animations with storylines determined by a stream of consciousness narration by a young girl. The realistic soundtrack coupled with Barlett's imaginative clay animation made the *Penny* shorts a stand-out in that innovative show.

Barlett laughingly called his *Penny* shorts as "2-D" animation since it was clay animation without armatures. The models didn't stand up on an animation table, but were animated laying on top of a glass plate that was suspended above the background art. Often working without a formal script or storyboard, the *Penny* shorts were produced "straight-ahead" from the beginning of the narrative to the end. Barlett likened it to a "jazz performance captured on film."

After *Pee Wee Playhouse*, Barlett made three clay animated shorts featuring his character of Arnold. They were featured in the 21st, 22nd and 23rd *Tournee of Animation* collections, and one *Arnold Rides a Chair* has been featured on *Sesame Street*.

In 1991, Paul Germain introduced Barlett to Gabor Csupo of Klasky-Csupo, and Barlett began work as a story editor on *Rugrats*. It was his first introduction to cel animation, and German and Barlett co-wrote the first season of *Rugrats*. He broke into direction cel animation on the 13th episode of that first season.

He said he was happy to have made the switch from clay to cel animation.

"[The] key to my being able to succeed in Hollywood was being able to jump from one to another. If I had just done clay animation or special effects and stop motion animation, I would have run out of work. I remember at the time thinking that this will be good developing a relation with Klasky-Csupo and Nickelodeon because I had the sense I wouldn't have enough work to do if I stayed in clay."

Barlett also did some direction work on *The Ren and Stimpy Show*, and worked with the Bob Rogers Company producing special venue films for Expos '90, '92, and '93 and the film *Mystery Lodge* for the popular southern California amusement park Knott's Berry Farm.

He's returned to television animation with *Hey Arnold!* and brought with him ideas to make his series different than those on which he worked.

Besides the urban setting and the distinctive design, Barlett decided to cast child actors for his voice performers rather than adult actors, a first for Nickelodeon and a rarity in animation. Fourteen year-old Toran Caudell plays Arnold, while 11 year-old Francesca Smith is Helga, and Jamil Walker Smith is Gerald.

While Barlett readily praised the adults who gave the voices to the kids in *Rugrats*, he wanted his show to be different. Adult actors were considered, but Barlett said that once he cast Smith as Helga, he knew all of the



Craig Barlett

performers had to be kids. Barlett knows that the changing voices of adolescence will be a challenge for him and his actors, but he's very pleased with their performances.

Barlett called *Hey Arnold!* a "script-driven show," and said, "that's a real distinction today from a storyboard artist writing a show. We're coming from a tradition of writing a real detailed screenplay and going in to record it. This evolved over the last year. First, we experimented with 'boarding and recording at the same time. Then [we did a] storyboard first and recording the dialogue after."

Barlett said that each show begins with a script that's recorded and then the voice track is given to the artist to help inspire the drawings.

"[This way it] gives the actors more ability to improvise to come up with stuff on the spot," he explained. There's plenty of ad libbing among the adult actors with Dan Castelloneta as Arnold's grandfather, Tress MacNeille as his grandmother, and Maurice LaMarche as Helga's

dad, Big Bob.

"They're wonderful improvisers," said Barlett.

His child actors may not improvise, but Barlett and his staff listen carefully to the way they speak to incorporate their study rhythms and sayings. As an added comic twist, Barlett has given his characters expressions that were popular thirty and forty years ago such as "Boy Howdy!" and "Criminy!"

Barlett is hopeful the Nickelodeon audience will respond to *Hey Arnold!* "I hope they like these characters because they have real feelings."

KABLAM!

What to you get when someone has the high concept idea of "live action cartoons?" Well, eventually you get *KABLAM!* The new Nickelodeon show is a blend of cel animation, stop motion, pixilation, and computer generated imagery. The show is set up as an animated

comic book with cartoon hosts Henry and June introducing the various segments which include:

Sniz and Fondue; two young cats in search of trouble and adventure.

Action League Now!: stop motion adventures of a group of well-used kid's action figures.

Life with Loopy: stories about an imaginative young girl told by her older brother Larry in paper cut-out stop motion.

Patch Head: a live action segment about the gear-jamming kid who lives in a watermelon patch and races his hot rod-like Big Wheel through country roads. This part of the show is easily what would have happened if the denizens of Mayberry had all dropped acid.

The creators of the show, Bob Mittenhal, Will McRobb, and Chris Viscardi are no strangers to Nickelodeon. Mittenhal is the co-creator of the hugely popular *Double Dare* and created *Welcome Freshmen*. McRobb and Viscardi created the innovative *The Adventures of Pete and Pete*. McRobb had some animation experience by working on *The Ren and Stimpy Show*, but he and Mittenhal readily described themselves as animation novices in a recent interview.

Mittenhal characterized the genesis of *KABLAM!* with a laugh as an "anti-animation story." McRobb and Mittenhal were asked by an advertising agency to team up and create a "live action cartoon show."

"We failed!," he laughed. In their attempt to discover just what was a "live action cartoon show" they discovered a lot of animation talent which didn't seem to fit into conventional television fare, some of which eventually formed the core of *KABLAM!*.

The individual segments of the show all have their own production units with Mittenhal, McRobb and Viscardi working with acclaimed cartoonist Mark Marek on the show's bridging sequences featuring the brother and sister team of Henry and June.

Henry and June literally step in and out of an animated comic book in order to introduce the various segments and to have their own adventures.

The team of three producers are also working closely with writer and director Tim Hill on the *Action League Now!* segments. *The Action League Now!* is a combination of stop motion animation and "chuck-a-mation," a technique in which a character is thrown by unseen hands into the action.

While *ALN!* is certainly not stop motion animation along the caliber of Ray Harryhausen, the idea was to replicate the kind of wild storylines and rough play kids themselves put their own toys through. A key aspect of the segment are the characters themselves; all action figures who all have seen much better days. To give you an idea one of the characters is Meltman,

who must have been on the receiving end of a magnifying glass on a sunny summer day.

Greg Harrison, whose work has appeared on MTV's *Liquid Television*, is the man behind *Patchhead* which combines live action with a variety of computer generated imagery. More than any other segment, McRobb and Mittenhal believe this comes closest to a live action cartoon.

There are a number of other segments to *KABLAM!*, some of which will appear more than others. McRobb, whose exposure to animation was as a story editor on *The Ren and Stimpy Show*, said he didn't feel beholden to any particular style of animation. He wanted to present alternative material to the Nick audience.

Both producers want to have the show to possess a genuine "underground" atmosphere to it. Their vision of *KABLAM!* is one of a "boutique" said Mittenhal.

"*KABLAM!* is a place for independent artists who have a vision," he said.

The same attitude impacts the show's humor. By now, many people have commented on Nickelodeon's house style of pushing the

*Continued on
Page 68*

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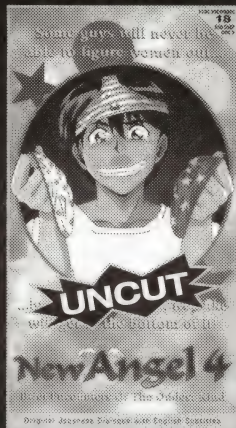
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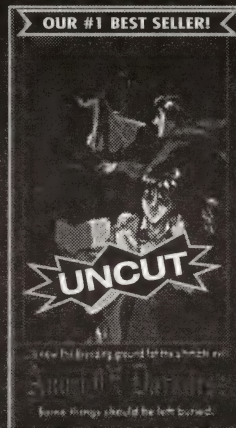
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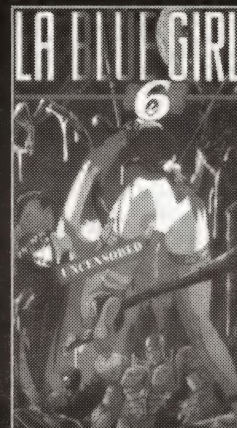
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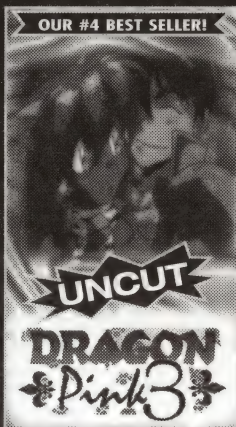
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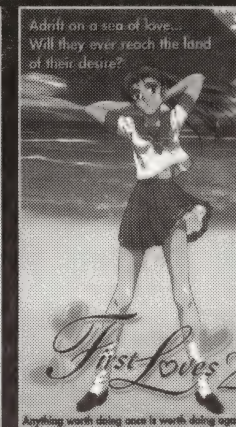
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Popeye Pretenders, Bogus Blutos, and Alternative Olives *Our Ace Voice Detectives Hames Ware and Graham Webb Are On the Trail Again*

by Hames Ware with Graham Webb

When one turns towards the New York (and Florida, briefly) based Fleischers and Famous Studios, at first glance it seems to have been (unlike the myriad voices used by their West Coast Rivals) a triumvirate ruled kingdom - Jack Mercer, Mae Questel and Jackson Beck - at home with the wonderful match-up of their voices and the cartoon characters, Popeye, Olive Oyl and Bluto.

But upon closer scrutiny; it becomes quickly clear the voices at Fleischer/Famous were manyfold; more than just the terrific trio of Mercer-Questel-Beck.

This initial article will focus though, only on the Popeyes, where we'll take a look at the trio's predecessors, interlopers, and substitutes.

There have been over the years a number of obituaries to appear in various trade papers with the tag-line "Long-Time Voice of Popeye." One of the most transparent claims to date was an individual who professed to have been recording the voice of Popeye since 1927; not only six years before the Fleischers intended to animate him, but two full years before E.C. Segar even created the character for his Thimble Theater comic strip! The fact is only one individual truly owned and deserved that description, the late Jack Mercer.

There's never enough space to pay tribute enough to Jack Mercer, a favorite of the editor of **ANIMATO!** and of the writers, but suffice it to say Jack Mercer will always be - the voice of Popeye the Sailor.

But Jack was not the first, nor by far the only voice for Popeye in the Fleischer/Famous Theatrical Series of animated shorts, but was undisputedly the best voice for the character.

Popeye's first voice belonged to a novelty singer from vaudeville and radio who called himself "Red Pepper Sam" and whose real name was William A. Costello (1898-1971).

One has to assume the "Red Pepper" sound of Costello's froggy renditions caught the ears of the Fleischer family as they were developing E.C. Segar's comicstrip to animated form, and so Popeye's distinctive gruff and raspy voice was given first life by Costello's Red Pepper



Jack Mercer, Mae Questel, and Jackson Beck mug for the camera at a Famous Studios recording session in the late Forties. (photo courtesy of Mrs. Virginia Mercer)

Sam delivery.

Though Mae Questel seems to have been there to provide Olive's voice, there are several other early Olives to be heard opposite Costello as well. Some names of these alternative Olives are known - Ann Rothschild aka Little Ann Little, Bonnie Poe and perhaps Kate Wright and others. The identity of the original Olive, though, is unknown.

Rounding out the trio was another deep

and raspy voiced actor doing the first Bluto. Alas, this actor's name remains as yet unknown, though any aficionado of New York based old time radio with an ear for character actors would probably recognize this very familiar voice (Bernard Lenrow and Winfield Hooney come immediately to mind as possibilities). This actor also sang the opening song, "Strike Up the Band for Popeye the Sailor."

Since Graham Webb and I couldn't put a



Nearly forty years later the mugging continues. At a 1984 recording date, Beck and Mercer square off in front of a horrified Questel. (photo courtesy of Mrs. Virginia Mercer)

definite name on this first Bluto, Graham dubbed him "Wheatcakes" as that's a menu item this actor keeps bellowing for in one of the early the Betty Boop cartoons *Betty's Boop's Bizzzy Bee*.

It should be mentioned that for a while Graham and I entertained the thought that Costello himself might have been doubling as "Wheatcakes" especially since "Wheatcakes" departs Fleischers almost simultaneously with Costello's disappearance.

It was during this interim period of late 1934 and early 1935, between Costello's departure and Mercer's cementing the part, that the first of the Popeye pretenders appeared. One cartoon in 1934, *The Dance Contest* appears to be the only non-Costello for that year.

The other early 1935's that appear to be neither Costello or Mercer are *Beware of Barnacle Bill*, *Be Kind to Animals*, and *Pleased to Meet Cha*. These could be the work of radio Popeye Floyd Buckley or another radio performer with the suspicious name of Det Poppin. These three titles also represent the last of the "Wheatcakes" Bluto.

You Gotta Be A Football Hero, *Choose Yer Weapons*, *For Better or Worsen* and *The Hypnotist* are iffy Mercers. The last of these is the first appearance of the great basso voiced Gus Wicki as Bluto. But by the end of the 1935 titles like *King of the Mardi Gras*, *Adventures of Popeye*, and *Spinich Overture*, it's now clearly Jack Mercer making Popeye his own.

And so with Mercer, Questel and Wicki firmly in place the first triumvirate with true tenure marches in place together from late 1935 until early 1938, when, as Fleischer began to shift production to Florida, Questel and Wicki

chose to stay in New York.

Margie Hines, married at one time to Mercer, slipped into the voice part of Olive relatively smoothly, leaning more towards a ZaSu Pitts delivery, but, replacing Gus Wicki came harder. Wicki, as mentioned, possessed one of the deepest voices on earth, and try as they might, the Fleischers couldn't come up with anybody in Florida to give Bluto a definitive voice.

But try they did, running through a half dozen voices from radio announcer William Pennell to West Coast storyman Tedd Pierce and to veteran voice man Pinto Colvig.

As mentioned in an earlier column, it's our opinion that Pinto's voice talents were basically wasted at Fleischers and his Bluto is no exception. In fact, the best of these Florida interim Blutos is none of the known ones and is an actor Graham and I dubbed, "Black Bluto" due to his strikingly similar delivery to Charles Correll's Andy of *Amos and Andy* radio fame, (and like Correll, most likely not a black man).

Pierce, who can be heard as Bluto in the 1940's *Stealin' Aint Honest*, and Colvig, heard in *Wotta Nightmare* among others, plus both did several non-Bluto roles as well in the 1939-40 period.

Pinto and Pierce and Bluto himself are mostly out of the picture in 1941, and besides the aforementioned, Pennell and "Black Bluto" used in 1942, there's a possible reappearance by old reliable "Wheatcakes" in *Olive Oyl and Water Don't Mix*. If not "Wheatcakes" then again it's another familiar New York radio type.

Sure enough by 1944 Margie Hines is

gone and Mae Questel is back as Olive. By *Anvil Chorus Girl* (1944) Jackson Beck steps up to the microphone and claims Bluto for the rest of the series. So with Mercer, Questel and Beck finally together you'd think all were in place to stay - and Questel and Beck were indeed.

But Jack Mercer, after a decade as the only voice for Popeye, was about to be called into the service, and just as with the post Costello period a decade earlier, a flurry of try-out voices for Mercer's temporary replacement occurred in late 1945 wherein *For Better or Nurse*, some lines are rendered by someone other than Mercer and 1945's last title *Shape Ahoy* presents the best of the Mercer mimics, possibly radio's Popeye Floyd Buckley or the ubiquitous Danny Webb fresh out of the service and a decade earlier of myriad voice characterizations for the West Coast Studios (including a Popeye bit for a muscle bound chicken in Warner Brothers *Porky's Garden*).

This same mimic is heard in 1946 *Klondike Casanova* and *Service With a Guile*, and Graham has identified the fill-in Popeye voice in *Fustic Mystic*, *Island Fling*, and *Abusement Park* as Harry Foster Welch, who had performed a Popeye voice on a childrens' record.

Mae Questel has said she filled in some during Mercer's absence. She recalled to Graham Webb that the stand-in Popeye on one short was having a bad case of "mic fright" and that she had to take over the part. At the end of *Better or Nurse* is a scene in which Popeye's gurgling laughter turns very feminine and perhaps this is Questel's performance.

Finally Mercer seems to have returned for at least some lines in *Fystic Mystic*, *Rocket to Mars* and *Rodeo Romeo* and is back permanently in 1946's last title *I'll Be Skiing You*.

And so the triumvirate was finally back together to stay and would now carry on their coveted roles to the end of the theatricals and beyond.

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CHANGING VOICES

Our voice detective hangs up his hat... for the time being!

by Hames Ware

No, that's not a typo up there in the column heading. After several wonderful years of doing a column on the lesser known cartoon voice artists of theatrical cartoons, it's time for me to turn over the microphone to friend and collaborator Keith Scott, (Australia's Mel Blanc).

When Michael and Patrick offered me the opportunity to do a regular column on voices I jumped at the chance.

Old timers will recall that 20 + years ago British cartoon historian Graham Webb collaborated with animator Milt Gray and *Funnyworld* (a predecessor to modern animation fan magazine) publisher Mike Barrier and myself, to do what became the definitive article on theatrical cartoon voices. Then things stayed pretty quiet for a while, until **ANIMATO!** came along.

My goal in the first few columns for **ANIMATO!** was to bring readers and cartoon-voice enthusiasts up to date on loose ends left dangling 20 + years previous - and happily **ANIMATO!** readers were the first to learn of the long sought identity of MGM's wonderful Screwly Squirrel (radio actor Wally Maher) Sniffles' first voice (Gay Seabrooke - it should be noted Chuck Jones cannot confirm this one) and WB's Egghead (Dave Weber, who **ANIMATO!** readers also got to learn changed his name to Danny Webb to enter live action films).

(Editor's note: before Hames goes on further, he will continue writing special articles for ANIMATO!, especially issue 38 which will be a special voice actors issue! GMD)

Sharp eared **ANIMATO!** readers who'd long had doubts about the commonly held belief that Tex Avery, long gone from WB's, had somehow returned to WB's from MGM just to do the spider's voice in WB's wonderful *Meatless Flyday*. It made a great story but the truth turned out to be that, though the spider's voice was patterned somewhat after Tex's (especially the laugh), the voice itself was provided by Cy Kendall in a beautiful stroke of voice casting. (This is Kendall's only known cartoon work) And though there is no question that it's Kendall, such legends and rumors are difficult to lay to rest. Keith tells me the internet has a group of cartoon voice afficiandos who debate who did what including *Meatless Flyday*'s spider's voice. Apparently one fellow

named Charles has held out for the spider not being Tex, well Charles - hang in there - you're right! - And here's hoping you and the internet will discover **ANIMATO!** where in this, past, and future issues, the answers as to who did what voice can be counted on to appear!

But lest I give the impression of knowing it all, let me point out that as recently as a past issue I too may have inadvertently based a hypothesis on a faulty premise or rather several faulty premises.

My premises were that:

A: Pinto Colvig left his voice work at Disney sometime in 1938.

B: To work for Fleischer in Florida soon after and

C: Stayed there til after 1941, and finally,

D: Even if he hadn't, this great voice talent would most surely not be relegated to a subordinate few lines as heard in the MGM cartoons of the period - *Bats in the Belfry* and *One Ham's Famine*.

Add to all these premises that, to my ear at least, something of the real Colvig was missing in these jobs.

And so on the strength of all these admittedly persuasive premises, I decided only one answer could explain the presence of such work - a Colvig mimic, filling in for the master, while he was away in Florida.

Well there is a Colvig mimic at MGM, and several at Disney during Colvig's absence - (Richard Edwards being the best of the bunch) and then someone can be heard doing the stork in MGM's *Stork's Holiday*, but even in this definitely non Colvig job are sown still more seeds of a fault-lined general premise - and here's why:

Faulty Premise A. It's true that Colvig departed Disney sometime around 1938, not to return as Goofy's voice until 5 years later - But, he apparently didn't leave Disney due to contractual obligations to Fleischers. In fact, the Fleischer's job in Florida was still a ways off. So Colvig was still available even during most of the so-called Florida Fleischer years.

Faulty Premise B. The above is borne out by clearly Colvig himself voice overs at WB's in 1939's *Hobo Gadget Band* et al (but not *Jeepers Creepers* where Mel mimics Pinto and 1942's *Conrad the Sailor*).

And thanks to Keith Scott's abundance of radio show credits, we know that Colvig was also appearing (sporadically it's true) in the years in question on West Coast shows.

Keith's detective work in Hollywood also knocked a hole in false premise D. Finding Colvig credited for just one line in a Lantz cartoon short of later years. So if Colvig could do just one line in a Lantz, he certainly could have taken subordinate work at MGM earlier.

This all brings us 'round to the *Stork's Holiday*, the one MGM which is clearly not Colvig. So why does even this one cartoon that makes the case for a Colvig mimic, also undermine all the other premises as well? Because if a discerning ear listens carefully to the Stork when he gulps and exclaims: "killed?" One will hear the master himself! It's true. Though all the rest of the stork's lines are spoken by a mimic so adept one has to wonder if he did not also provide the giraffe's voice in Disney's *Elmer Elephant*. It's clear that the man himself was at MGM around the time of *Bats in the Belfry* and *One Ham's Family*.

So are those two wonderful cartoons Colvig or the master mimic at work? The moment we voice detectives can answer that conclusively, **ANIMATO!** readers will be the next to know! The answer to this puzzler, as with the so many of the other answers uncovered over the past 2 to 3 years since Keith Scott teamed up with Graham and myself, will likely be solved by the old-time radio connection (Wally Maher, Gary Seabrooke, Cy Kendall, et al, are all major radio actors and their cartoon connections were all solved by hearing similar character appearances on comedy and dramatic radio shows.)

In fact we have probably uncovered as many cartoon voice providers in the last 2 or 3 years as in all the previous decades. And with most of the primary information sources gone now, (God bless Bob Clampett, Walter Tetley, Billy Bletcher, Billy Gilbert, Hal Smith and the many others who shared their memories of co-workers first hand with me) old time radio shows have now become the solution to most remaining voice mysteries.

And this is the reason why Keith Scott is the best choice to continue **ANIMATO!**'s column on early career voice artists. Not only is Keith a master mimic himself, with the keen ear necessary to be a success in such endeavors, but he has one of the largest collections of old time radio shows on earth. (and an added plus, wife Sue's an excellent typist so that Michael will no longer have to try to decipher my scrawl!!)

To drive home how important old time radio was as a feeder source for cartoon voices, as well as to point out Keith's clever role in

future voice discoveries. Here's a wonderful recent example - and for **ANIMATO!** readers still another "you-heard-it-here-first!"

For years Graham and I have been baffled by the identity of the voice rendered for the Italian gardener in WB's 1937 *Porky's Garden*, maddeningly familiar to us both, yet eluding us for two decades.

At one point we thought perhaps, since a baby chicken delivers a Popeye froggy line, that it might be a Danny Webb doubling as the gardener - but nope - it wasn't Danny. Nor was it Italian specialists like Henry Armetta, Gino Corrado, Paul Porcasi, or even Mestor Paiva.

When Keith joined us, he and I agreed that the voice actor the gardener most reminded us of was Alan Reed (known to this generation as the voice of Fred Flintstone, but to an earlier radio generation as the voice of many characters including an on-going role as Pasquale on J Carroll Naish's *Life with Luigi*.), but alas Keith and I also knew that 1937 was too early for Reed to be in Hollywood, and besides, the voice only reminded us of Reed. We knew it wasn't. About the same time we were struggling to I.D. the gardener. Keith sent a Disney *Pinocchio* adaptation done for radio, which gathered many of the original film cast together, and filling in other roles with similar voiced radio actors, including - you guessed it - Alan Reed, who did a great job as Stromboli. Radio casting directors were adept at knowing which actors sounded alike, when replacements were needed as Walter Tetley who played Leroy on *The Great Gildersleeve*, told me when the Gildersleeve

role went from Hal Peary to Willard Waterman, many listeners never knew the difference.

Instinct told me that the Italian gardener was like Reed, not a true Italian-American especially since I was also pretty certain that this same actor delivered the opening announcement in the WB's *Porky's Romance* the same year in an accent free voice. (Some may think this is a Billy Bletcher job. It is true Billy delivers the line "time munches on" but he's not the opening narrator).

As all these variable but interconnected facts circulated in my brain it hit me - now I knew why that Italian gardener sounded so familiar to Graham and me for so long, and why it reminded Keith and me so much of Alan Reed!

When the casting director of the Disney *Pinocchio* radio adaptation couldn't get the original voice actor for the part of Stromboli, he'd gotten the closest sound alike actor available, now on the 1940's Hollywood scene - Alan Reed.

Therefore if Alan Reed sounded like the Stromboli actor, ergo the original Stromboli surely sounded like Alan Reed and Bingo! We had our Italian gardener at long last. Dutch born Charles Judels, the original Stromboli!

When I told Keith of the discovery he didn't even hesitate. "You're right!" And typical of Keith's meticulous attention to detail his voice matched a Judels radio appearance where he had been available to do Stromboli, placing it side by side with the Italian gardener's voice - a perfect match!

Such are the thrills of voice detectives and so it has been my pleasure to share these with **ANIMATO!** readers these past few years - and I'm happy to report, many more wonderful columns sharing voice related mysteries and discoveries await **ANIMATO!** readers as Keith carries on.

As for me, with Keith working on the column, I'll be freed up to work on some special features for **ANIMATO!**, beginning with personal reminiscences of the greatest of all cartoon villain voices, Billy Bletcher. (Which will hopefully appear just in time for **ANIMATO!**'s next all-voices issue!) I'll also continue to work with Keith and Graham on our voice detective projects - with an eventual focus on what we hope will be the definitive book on all the voice actors of the major Hollywood cartoon studios from 1930's-1960's.

In the meantime we'll stay available to **ANIMATO!** readers, providing our help with voice ID's, and we need your help as well. If you have any articles or other material from movie or radio-TV magazines of the 30's, 40's and 50's, specifically on the more obscure performers like Kent Rogers, Dick Nelson, et al who did cartoon work as well.

So until then, thanks and God bless! 

The author gratefully acknowledges the help and support of Graham Webb, Keith Scott, Makesha Meux, Pam Chilcote, and Lynne Allan.

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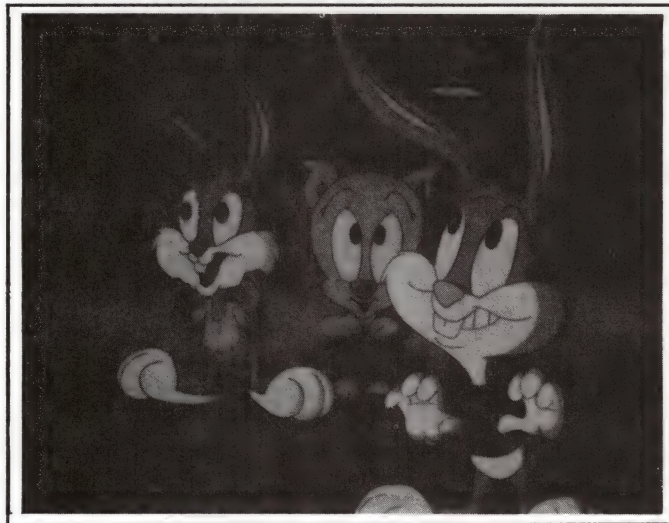
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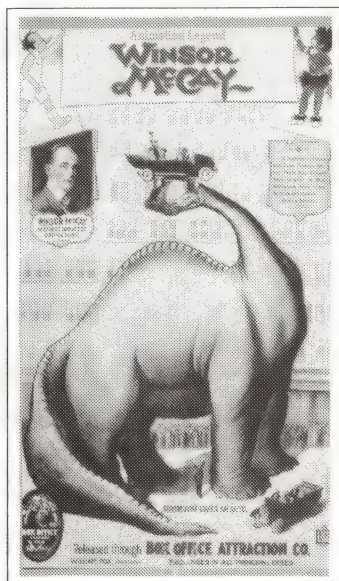
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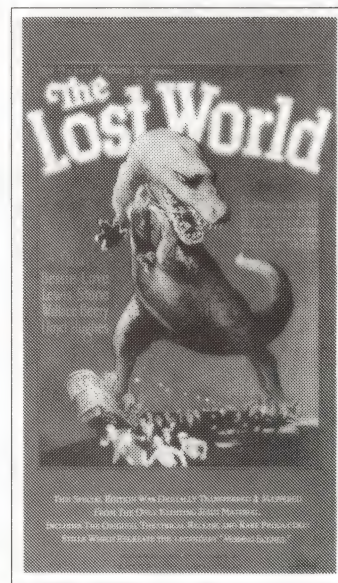
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Gargoyles



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YOUR GUIDE TO GARGOYLES

The popular Disney adventure series is debuting a new show and new storyline this fall. Terrence Briggs looks at the first 65 Gargoyle episodes.

by Terrence Briggs

I honestly wish that there were more room for intro, but otherwise...

This is an episode guide that (despite any broadcasting screw-ups) is reflective of the specific order in which the episodes proceed in the series' continuity. While many of the episodes between *Avalon 3* and *Future Tense* can be placed in any order, this guide should be used as a general reference to avoid too many continuity errors in viewing the episodes. This is especially true of *The Price*, which aired a good number of eps out of order. *Kingdom* is believe to have been aired late in the continuity, but its placement in the airing schedule (between *Ill Met by Moonlight* and *Hound of Ulster*) is fine as far as continuity goes.

Important point: I have been accused of being quite harsh in my reviews of these episodes, but I assure you that I am as much of a *Gargoyles* fan as anyone. My grading scale relates episodes on their individual merit, not in relation to each other (i.e., the best episode of the series does not receive a perfect grade). While I have yet to see a *Gargs* episode worthy of an [A+] grade from me, you will be more comfortable if you accept my grades as the pure, subjective items that they are.

Last bit of opening business: Thanks especially go to Juan F. Lara (#1 Gadget Fan), fellow Gargoylian David Sampson, Gargoyles writer Diane Duane, and all those members of Gargoyles fandom who offered support, information, and feedback. I could not have done it without all of you!

On with the show...

Key to credits:

S: Story by
T: Teleplay by
D: Directed by
A: Animation by

Awakening

S: Eric Luke and Michael Reaves
T: Michael Reaves
D: Frank Paur

A: Walt Disney-Japan

This five-part TV pilot does a decent job of setting up the potentially interesting story of the Gargoyles. Many of the show's more enticing plot elements (such as those involving Xanatos' charisma and cunning, and the mix of sorcery and sci-fi) are set up very nicely here, but so are the more mundane items (the history of the Gargoyles in Scotland, Demona's personality).

Though this pilot is very well-conceived and -developed (behind *Phantom 2040*, it's the most intelligent toon pilot I've seen), and the action in the present day can be quite exciting, the story's many slow spots keep the entertainment value from approaching that of my personal benchmark for pilot quality, the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* pilot. [B]

Thrill of the Hunt

W: M. Reaves
A: Animal-Ya/Jade
D: Kazuo Terada

Thrill of the Hunt pits Goliath and Lexington against The Pack, TV personalities looking for a challenge. In an episode as thinly-plotted as this, the height of the story should be the action. Unfortunately, the Pack lack in terms of appeal, making their confrontations with our heroes less than enthralling, and the dialogues between Goliath and Lex on trusting humans are even worse. Except for the very end, which brings the entire story together, the utter boredom reaches a point where you'll want to just fast forward the blasted thing. [C/C-]

Temptation

W: Brynne Chandler Reaves



D: Terada and Saburo Hashimoto

A: Tama/Jade

Temptation feels even more standard than *Hunt*, but is a *bit* less boring. Credit that to Jeff Bennett who gives his performance of Brooklyn the edge it needs to make him the most intriguing character in the series. (No other voice actor I've heard can deliver such a standard line as, "I was a fool to trust you!" and make it sound good.) In an episode such as this, where Brooklyn takes center stage, you can take really let him sink in. Of course, he meets the least intriguing character in the series, Demona, who persuades Brooklyn (by contrived and unimaginative anti-human speeches and events) to bring Goliath to her. Marina Sitiris has given worse performances in this show, but this isn't too far behind. I suppose that if you mix a great character with a poor character *and* story, they cancel each other out. [B-]

Deadly Force

W: M Reaves
D: Terada
A: A-Ya

Continued on Page 34



Deadly Force was the first episode to truly impress me, at least in a minimal sense, due to its rather heavy subject matter. Okay, maybe Elisa's getting shot by Broadway's foolishly playing with a gun after watching a spaghetti western (in a movie theater!) isn't much heavier than an Afterschool Special...but it does have a rather effective point. There are many things in this ep that could go wrong but never surface: Richard Grieco's voice work for Draygon is very smooth (if not DEEEEEEP); the directing of the climax is out of sight (with laser blasts that illuminate the dark areas, for example); and when Broadway finally fesses up to Elisa, it avoids the windbag speeches that a bad *Gargoyles* episode would most likely give. [B]

Enter Macbeth

W: Steve Perry

D: Terada & Hashimoto

A: Wang

A fierce new enemy, Macbeth, is introduced as he faces off with the Gargoyles. *Enter Macbeth* has potential as a good episode (which is apparent from some interesting elements, like Goliath stubbornly refusing to leave the castle and his mano-a-mano with Macbeth), but it comes across as shallow for its loosely executed fight scenes and superficial execution of some important points in the story. I'd rather not give too much away about the story, suffice to say that it opens a lot of doors without really stepping through them. Yes, Brooklyn does his great work in this episode too. [B-]

The Edge

W: M Reaves

D: Paur

A: WD-Japan

Perhaps the most amazing thing about Michael Reaves is his, well, inconsistency. He's easily one of the very best writers in animation today, but he has a few problems. He can write dud episodes like *Thrill of the Hunt* and great ones like *Deadly Force* and this episode in the same day, I suppose. *Edge* centers around Goliath's frustration with Xanatos, and Reaves' writing greatly succeeds in engrossing the audience with his feelings. Outstanding animation enhances both the verbal and physical action scenes, in which Reaves also manages to tickle the viewer's fancy. [B+/A-]

A Long Road to Morning

W: BC Reaves

D: Terada & Hashimoto

A: Sunwoo

The spotlight is on old man Hudson this

time, as his past is revealed through a series of flashbacks all the while protecting a wounded Goliath from a vengeful Demona. Well, now that I know Hudson's past, I can't say I still care too much about him as a character (it is good, however, to see him out of that friggin' recliner). I can't say I'm too fond of the constant barrage of flashbacks, which don't tell the most interesting of stories to begin with, and actually seem confusing at times. Demona's tiresome repertoire of villainous ranting and raving is no fun, either. [C+]

Her Brother's Keeper

W: M Reaves

D: Terada & Takamitsu Kawamura

A: Jade

Elisa's brother Derek, whom we met in *Deadly Force*, is offered a job by Xanatos; and Elisa is shocked that Derek would even consider the offer, which he accepts. Meanwhile, Jackal and Hyena, members of the Pack are on the loose, under orders to kill Xanatos. The conflict between Elisa's fears and Derek's wishes becomes a very interesting look at perception. What one sees and believes becomes a very important issue here; one that really hit home for me. Also of creative note is the great dialogue here. Though Reaves kept the Pack as bland as possible in *Thrill of the Hunt*, he turns Jackal and Hyena into very interesting personalities. The direction and animation are also at the series' best (I loved Jackal and Hyena's flamboyance, which heightened the intensity of the action scenes). First the first time, I had a *serious* reason to watch the program; I couldn't miss it, seeing as how the show's concept had finally shown its full potential. [A-]

Reawakening

W: BC Reaves

D: Terada & Hashimoto

A: WD-Japan

A previously unmentioned rookery brother of Goliath, Coldstone, is revived by Demona and Xanatos as a cyborg. Once that's out of the way, this season finale lets loose in the way all good ones do — references to past episodes, one-on-one showdowns between certain characters, and a closure to the basic events of the year. We get all that in a rather effective manner, especially the Times Square faceoff between our heroes and Demona's new "clan". Sure, it's nothing no other action series hasn't done before, but aren't these finales supposed to be all in good fun? [B]

Leader of the Pack

W: Perry

D: Paur

A: WD-Japan

The pack is back (catchy, I know) with the assistance of a new member/leader, Xanatos. Shabby and superficial, this episode contains little in terms of plot, even less in terms of convincing character development. Every line of dialogue comes across as forced and lessens the impact of the events with explicitness. Sorry, but a show like *Gargoyles* deserves much better. [C-]

Metaphomosis

W: BC Reaves & Lydia C. Marano

D: Paur

A: Sunwoo

A rogue geneticist, Professor Anton Sevarius, has been attempting to produce gargoyles, and may be turning Elisa's brother, Derek, into one of these experiments. Brooklyn isn't as appealing or convincing as he should be when his feelings for one of the runaway experiments (Maggie) are revealed, which is a shame; and the whole explanation of the story's events leaves far too much to chance to be believe-able. On another note, the episode's tragic ending is both effectively unsettling and remarkably trendsetting. Perhaps the animation industry is truly on its way to producing some REAL serious stuff in the future. [B-/B]

Legion

W: Robert Skir & Martin Isenberg

D: Paur

A: Sunwoo

Coldstone revives himself from his watery grave, but a virus is turning him into a walking time bomb that Goliath must defuse by entering his cybernetic body via virtual reality. Sounds out-of-sorts and it is. Lexington may be a computer knick-knacker from the 10th century, but he seems WAY out of his league with a VR machine and laptop at his side. Matt Bluestone also seems out of character, reverted to a bumbling gargoyle-hunter not unlike too many cartoon characters from the old days. By the time Goliath enters Coldstone's body to meet the okay personalities sharing his soul, I'd already tuned out for the most part to the goings-on, which is far from a good sign for a fan like me. [B-]

The Lighthouse in the Sea of Time

W: BC Reaves

D: Paur

A: Sunwoo

O.J. Readmore returns from the dead vis-a-vis this episode, in which Macbeth seeks the Scrolls of Merlin, one of which is in the



possession of Hudson, who is in the temporary care of a blind author. It is revealed in this episode that neither Hudson nor Broadway can read, so one would expect the obligatory indifference-turned-discovery for each of these characters, with all of the stilted dialogue to go with it. Of course, Reaves manages the most imaginative stilting I have yet to hear. [B-]

The Mirror

W: Marano

D: Paur

A: WD-Japan

One of the first things that my brother doesn't like about *Gargoyles* is its heavy-handed stories. Not this time. Demona steals a magic mirror that releases the mischievous child of Oberon, Puck (yet another Shakespearian figure makes it into this show). Marano really lets

dialogue that dropped my jaw. "Is this a cartoon?!" Ten minutes into *Falcon*, I found not only that Cary Bates is an amazingly skilled writer, but that this series is really taking their stories to the next level. An interesting mystery with smooth dialogue. [B]

Eye of the Beholder

W: Perry

D: Paur

A: WD-Japan

The talented Steve Perry finally comes through with an amazingly effective episode. Xanatos gives fiancée Fox an enchanted necklace that turns her into a werewolf by night, and the spell must be removed before midnight makes the spell permanent. Xanatos, feeling responsible for once, tries to undo his actions. Just about everything works well in this episode,

convince her medieval self to become more like her present self. And let's be wary of time travel in this show's future (shows like *X-Men* tend to let it run amuck). [B]

City of Stone 1

S: M Reaves

T: BC Reaves & Marano

D: Paur

A: Koko

This turning-point miniseries fills in all of the holes left by the pilot regarding Demona's fate after the Gargoyles were turned to stone. Granted, my bias against the medieval settings of the show tends not to tickle my fancy, but the events in the well-conceived story are more interesting than they were in previous episodes in the same setting (the Hunter character is particularly engaging). Sadly, the execution



loose, delivering one of those eps that the young fans of the show will really get a kick out of. Humans and gargoyles are changed into one another, Demona's rivalry with Elisa continues, and we get to see the on-again/off-again romantic relationship between Elisa and Goliath expose itself once more. A lot of fun to watch, with some great animation and coloring (despite over-cartoony character movement), clever dialogue typical of Marano, and a whimsical sort of superficiality that makes up most good animated episodes. [B/B+]

The Silver Falcon

W: Cary Bates

D: Paur

A: WD-Japan

There was one moment in *The Silver Falcon* that really caught my attention. In the second act, Mazza meets with an old man with an old picture of an old gangster. After Mazza sees the picture, she rambles for about a minute with

especially the directing. A few action scenes tend to drag on, however, and Xanatos' confession to Goliath and Elisa comes across as a bit too abrupt and out of character. [B/B+]

Vows

W: Shari Goodhartz

D: Paur

A: Sae Rom

At the wedding between Fox and Xanatos, they, Demona and Goliath are sent back to medieval times. Watching this episode, I found myself more impressed than ever with the writing style of Shari Goodhartz. Here, as in her work on *ExoSquad* and *Phantom 2040*, she keeps her characters cool and convincing and their dialogue intelligent. Her humor comes not from zingers or comic-relief, but from the cleverly placed lines of dialogue that are always in character for the players. The only time the story falls off is when Demona is reduced to her unbearable hate-mongering self as she tries to

just left me dry, save the really cool swordfights in the episode, which represent the best action in the episode. [B-/B]

City of Stone 2

S: M Reaves

T: BC Reaves & Marano

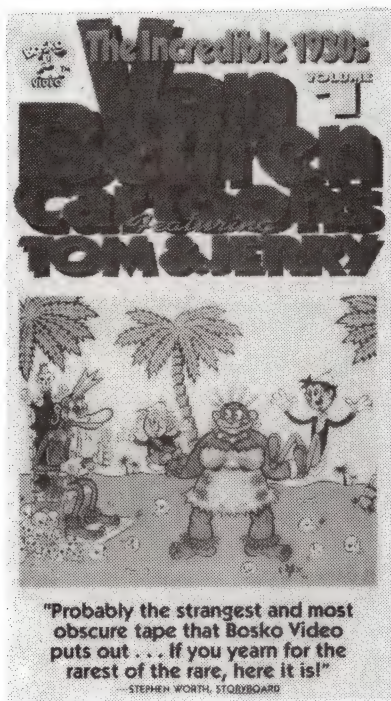
D: Paur

A: Koko

This part of the miniseries focuses on Macbeth's story, from his father's death to his cousin Duncan's Ascension to the throne. Same as in the first part, the story's still very involved, but not particularly involving. Macbeth is certainly present, but he exudes no presence, and everything else in the story around him consequently falls short. If only we got to see more of the Macbeth that says, "You're not worth the trouble," to his girlfriend(!). [B-]

City of Stone 3

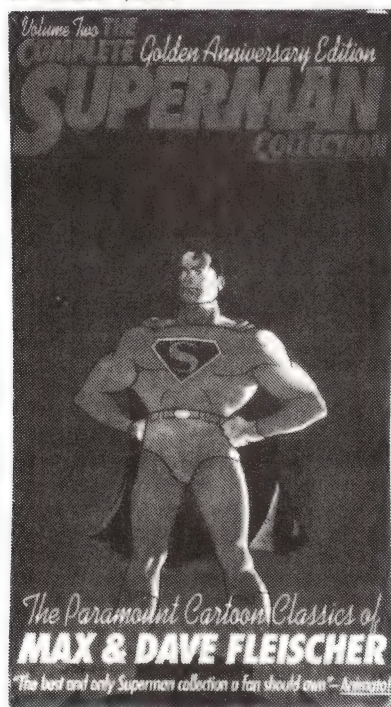
S: M Reaves



"Van Beuren Volume One" contains many rare gems not seen in almost 60 years. They feature two little guys, "Tom and Jerry." They contain ethnic stereotypes, which were prevalent in the 1930's. Titles are: "Wot a Night", "Trouble", "Jungle Jam", "A Swiss Trick", "Rocketeers", "Rabid Hunters", "In the Bag", "Pots and Pans", and "Grandfather's Clock", a part live-action cartoon. 70 Minutes - \$29.95

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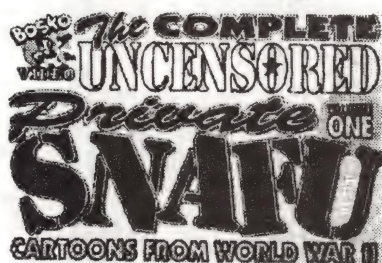
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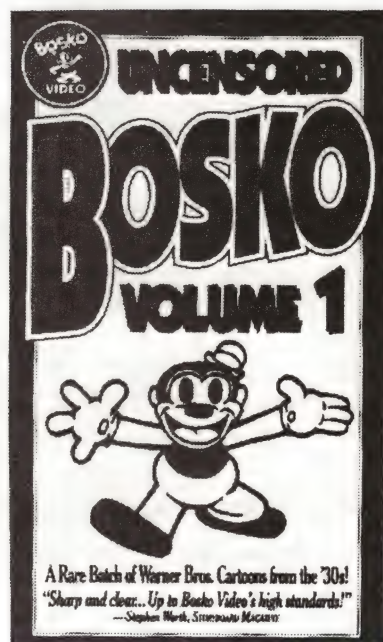
"Uncensored Pvt. Snafu Vol. 1" contains "Coming! Snafu!", "Gripes", "Spies", "The Goldbrick", "The Infantry Blues", "Fighting Tools", "The Home Front", "Rumors", "Booby Traps", "Snafuperman", "Snafu vs. Malaria Mike", "A Lecture on Camouflage", "Gas", and "Going Home". These rare films were made by Warner Bros. for the Armed Forces during WWII. These were animated by the great Warner directors, and voiced by Mel Blanc. 62 Minutes - \$29.95

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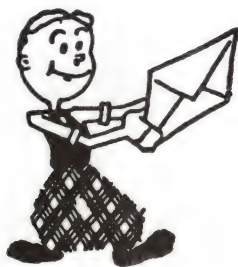
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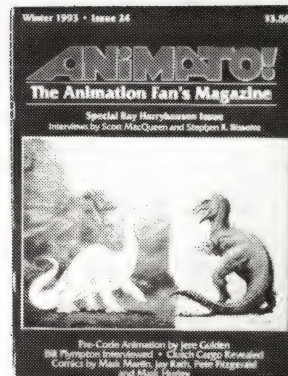


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T: BC Reaves & Marano

D: Paur

A: Koko

The connection between Demona and Macbeth is revealed, as is the remedy for the city's stone inhabitants. This episode proves once again that the present-day happenings in the show are more interesting than those in the past; with the scenes of New York's reawakening being much more appealing than the drab Scot speak dragging the flashbacks along. The animation begins to suffer in this episode, especially during the scene of the magical link between Macbeth and Demona, which has none of the vitality one would expect from such a potentially provocative event. The animation does at least manage one of the most disturbing images in the series; a fiery death that almost begs BS&P intervention. You will NOT see this kind of stuff when *Gargoyles* moves to Saturday Morning. [B-]

City of Stone 4

S: M Reaves

T: BC Reaves & Marano

D: Paur

A: Koko

Everything in both the past and present stories is wrapped up somewhat sufficiently in this episode, as we find out exactly what led to Macbeth's vengeful attitude, as well as the extent of the magical link between he and

Demona. Things in a finale of this sort should be all-get-out, but the sloppy animation really fusses everything up, especially the almost laughable interrogation between the Weird Sisters and Demona, which epitomizes the weak link between storyboard directors and some animation studios. Not as bad but still disappointing is the medieval story, which completely loses its narrative momentum to the point where the plot elements are practically shoved through instead of fully developed. [C+/B-]

Outfoxed

W: Bates

D: Woodyard

A: Hong Ying

More new characters (I hope the producers have room for all of these guys in the series finale), as the paraplegic Cyberbiotics chairman, Reynard, captures Goliath, whom he holds responsible for the destruction of his property. Goliath, however, blames Xanatos for deceiving him. The plot is more character study than anything, but it's too bad that the characters themselves don't have much of interest to peruse. Reynard's stubbornness makes him come across as a one-note personality, which lessens the impact of Goliath's development. At least there are plenty of robot drones, as well as an overly aggressive Goliath here, as the terrific artwork and directing make for a bashing good time. [B]

High Noon

W: Marano

D: Woodyard

A: WD-Japan

Demona and Macbeth are back, but why are they working together? Why has Coldstone returned to help them? For once, we see an appealing Demona character (!) through the smooth dialogue between her and Macbeth, making for a teamup that (unfortunately) won't and can't occur very often in the future. Marano (who's looking more and more impressive every day on her own) keeps the story continuously involving without slipping on her own narrative momentum. Not much in terms of story depth, however, but that's a small price to pay when I feel I can digest the material. Of course, little things like Elisa's sleeping problem tend to unsettle my stomach. [B]

Double Jeopardy

W: Bates

D: Paur

A: A-Ya/Morning Sun

As if a show like *Gargoyles* needed another nemesis, an everyday "clone" episode is one it needed even less. Writer Bates probably took this to heart keeping the plot execution full of twists and giving the characters some clever dialogue. The real treat, however, is Thailog; a creation wittier and craftier than perhaps any bad guy in recent animated history; and he makes quite an entrance. Credit Bates for not allowing a tiresome story concept to botch the show's high standards. [B]

Revelations

W: Bates

D: Paur

A: Tama/Jade

Matt Bluestone is another of *Gargoyles'* most appealing characters, and deserved a little credit for the dumbing-down job he got in *Legion*. This episode puts him at the center of the story as he enters the Illuminati society and discovers the existence of the Gargoyles. The ep starts out like *Silver Falcon* but ends up like a James Bond climax (with Goliath attempting to escape a lethally booby-trapped hotel). Unfortunately, the momentum is lost earlier than that, when Matt goes haywire and attempts to drive off a cliff in an utterly laughable sequence. Bates' incredibly intelligent style of writing is still enjoyable when it isn't bogged down by the more ridiculous plot elements; if it weren't for him, I'd have walked out by the second act. [B-/B]

Upgrade



W: Adam Gilad
D: Paur
A: Koko/Seoul

The Pack, sick and tired of being beaten around by the Gargoyles, decide to get cybernetic enhancements. Maybe *Brother's Keeper* was a fluke, seeing how utterly unappealing the Pack is to me; their personalities are only as static as the mundane lines they spew. A bit more camaraderie and we may have something, but until then we'll have to put up with this, another of the Pack's typically shallow brawls and bashes. The interesting character design and detail of the Pack's new digs may appeal to some, but that's not saying much. [C]

Protection

W: Gary Sperling
D: Butch Lukic
A: Sae Rom

Draycon's still making a nuisance of himself as he, with the help of Elisa, extorts local small businesses. Not much in terms of plot, character development, or intrigue. Amazingly, the story is half-interesting until the Gargoyles show up; at which point, hearing them make futile attempts at gangster dialogue and such becomes enervating. This kind of stuff belongs on another show. [C/C+]

The Cage

W: Marano
D: Woodyard
A: Toon City

The Mutates (Derek's clan of genetic gargoyle clones) do battle with the gargoyles, while Sevarius is captured and forced to cure Derek's condition by some unknown. Personally didn't think that I was going to like the Mutates, but I found the character personalities and the presentation of their feelings and concerns to be very effective. Most appealing is Claw, the cheeky, cutting member who loves his mutated form and shows it. True, the story does tread the very fine line between plot juggling and plot overload, but it does some pretty darned effective tightroping — which is where most ambitious shows fall flat. (Side note to the writers: Don't try tightroping too often.) Another hot area is the animation, which is short on detail but long on cool character movement and storyboard direction; both of which greatly enhance the effectiveness of what would have been a twitchy episode. [B\B+]

The Price

T: M. Reaves
D: Woodyard
S: Lee Nordling

A: WD-Japan

Hudson is kidnapped by Xanatos and believed to be dead, in another episode of character conflict and such. As in *Outfoxed*, the often stilted and speechified dialogue gets in the way of what should be interesting character development. Also shabby are the other unappealing side elements to the story (such as the tacked-on eulogy the Gargoyles give for Hudson). All in all, a very big disappointment for Michael Reaves. [C+ \C]

Avalon 1

W: BC Reaves & Marano
D: WD-Japan
A: Koko/DY

An old friend from Scotland returns and brings Goliath, Elisa, and Bronx to a magical island called Avalon, where Princess Katherine and the Magus have tended to Castle Wyvern's rookery eggs to this day. The first act has quite a bit of narrative potential, but the actual story (the fate of Katherine and Magus after the Viking takeover) is rather dull, with a laborious pace and drab character dialogue. [C+]

Avalon 2

W: Marano
D: Woodyard
A: Koko/Anima Sam Won

Lydia Marano goes it alone in this second part, which naturally becomes the most satisfying of the mini-series. Here, the story of how the Archmage obtained his incredible power is explained through an incredibly convoluted circular storyline involving the use of the Phoenix Gate. This is the best episode of the series involving the mideval setting, with character interaction so smooth and flowing that it engrosses the viewer in the Avalon story in addition to the bad guys who intend on tearing it asunder; unlike the plodding first part. [B]

Avalon 3

W: BC Reaves & Marano
D: Woodyard
A: Koko/Seoul Movie Inc.

It's the showdown of the isle as good buys battle the bad guys for control of Avalon. Whatever emotion displayed in the first part of the miniseries is just shot down in this episode, which is nothing more than a big fight scene with clunky confrontation dialogue. Remember when I said Macbeth and Demona made a good team? I take it back. Not only do they split off during the final battle, but being little more than drones lessens the impact of their sparrings. Real low-ball stuff. [C]

Shadows of the Past

W: M. Reaves
D: Terada
A: WD-Japan

Straight out of Avalon, Goliath and company's first stop is a mysterious cave where Goliath must face his dreadful past. Deadly dull in every respect, this ep left me sighing in apathy, or something like that. The most important feature of Goliath's character development leaves me even less concerned with his plight than I would've liked. In *The Edge*, Goliath (through convincing anger and frustration) delivered a more impressive picture of himself. His performance this episode consists mostly of moans and groans of vulnerability; which come across as whiny. Even Hacon never convinced me of his hate; just another one-note character from beginning to end. In an episode where almost nothing worked for me, I can only appreciate the intentions. [C]

Heritage

W: Adam Gilad
D: Paur
A: Sun Min

Goliath and company end up in the Pacific Northwest, where a Native American tribal elder and a Gargoyle descendant continue an endless struggle. Both characters are dull as dead meat, as is the other Native American character, who apparently has been modernized to the point where he's annoyingly ignorant. And speaking of dead meat, I can't tell you how much I hate filler, which is what the entire episode feels like. [C]

Monsters

W: Bates
D: Paur
A: Hong Ying

Finally, Angela's chance to fully develop herself as a character and she fails miserably. She's captured by Sevarius who's on an undersea hunt for "Nessies", with whom she has bonded very well. Well, nothing too enticing or interesting — just your normal, everyday *Lassie* dialogue between gargoyle and *Elasmosaurus*. Sevarius's usual clever self is the only thing keeping this episode from...well... sinking. [C]

Golem

W: Sperling
D: Paur
A: A-Ya/MS

Goliath and company continue on their road to everywhere in Prague, where Goliath spots Reynard and the legend of the Golem finds itself revisited for the first time since



Conan. Anyway, the goings-on are deady dull, especially the Golem itself, which seems to become even more lifeless once it is reawakened (no spoilers here). Even worse is the conflict solution, which negates the importance of practically everything before it. More filler. [C]

Sanctuary

W: Bates
D: Woodyard
A: Hahn Shin

On to Paris, where Macbeth is about to marry a humanized Demona, whose gargoyle form has fallen for Thailog. Bates falls into his usual exposition mode whenever background events need explaining, and the final fight scene between Demona and Macbeth is gloriously confusing. Still, this episode is full of great moments of story continuity (unlike many of the post-*Avalon* eps), and most of all, Thailog — proving once again that he's one of the most appealing bad guys on TV. [B]

M.I.A.

W: Robert Cohen
D: Teruda
A: WD-Japan

No matter how dull *Gargoyles* becomes, it will never be as dull as this episode, where Goliath must travel back in time to the WWII London Blitz and prevent the death of an allied soldier that Goliath is being held responsible for. Maybe the setting turned me off, but the muddled story, flat dialogue, unappealing character personalities, and drab plot execution did much worse; they lowered my opinion of the show for the first time since *Thrill of the Hunt*. If future episodes are allowed this kind of mediocrity, I'll be doing my own blitz, thank you very much. [C-]

Grief

S: M Reaves
D: Terada & Kawamura
T: B.C. Reaves and Marano
A: WD-Japan

It's Michael Reaves' *The Meaning of Life!* *Grief* brings back the tedious Pack and their ridiculous upgrades to Egypt, where Goliath and company have been sent. The Amir has obtained a spell which allows him to summon and control the Egyptian jackal god of death, making him an Avatar. The Amir isn't that appealing of a character, but at least he doesn't make up his mind in an unconvincing manner the way far too many characters have in this series. The Pack is still as standard as every other television bad- die, and Angela still does absolutely nothing this time around. [C+]

Kingdom

W: Skir & Isenburg
D: Woodyard
A: TC

Back in New York, Brooklyn and the rest of the NY clan join up with the Mutates to find out what has happened to Goliath and company. Meanwhile, Fang is planning to usurp Talon as unofficial leader of the Mutates. This ep is, in a word, expected. No real surprises past the opening minutes of the episode, and no real ambition, either. Brooklyn's performance holds no real surprises (How many times has one seen this exact, same execution on just about any other television series?) Derek/Talon sounds less like a former cop and more like a Saturday Morning action hero, and the rest of the Mutates are duller than ever, reduced to nothing in this episode thanks to their lack of presence and focus (the biggest loss being the otherwise entertaining Fang). The Toon City animation is much too loose, and the writing presents the feelings too explicitly, undermining the potential effectiveness of the episode. One good point: Xanatos is back! [C/C+]

Hound of Ulster

S: M. Reaves
T: Diane Duane and Peter Morwood
D: Kline
A: Koko

Sheena Easton the Banshee? *Hound of Ulster* could work simply on a pitch like that, but it doesn't. Yet another dull-o-rama from the Travellers' Tales of Goliath and company as they arrive in Ireland. The good news, if any for this ep, was the decision to have Sheena Easton voice the Banshee; this version of the Banshee worked better than the last one I can remember in *The Real Ghostbusters*. Aside from that, this ep left a bad taste in my mouth, feeling like a weak cross between the John Landis film, *American Werewolf in London*, and the *Gargoyles* episode *Heritage*. I also had no love for the farm-boy-with-no-future story, either. The mystical Hero of Ulster does battle with Banshee with Bronx as his mount. Yawn. [C/C+]

Walkabout

S: M. Reaves
D: Woodyard
T: Perry
A: Koko/DY

The Travellers arrive in Australia, where a discontented Dingo seeks redemption and a dangerous new form of computerized microorganisms (*The Matrix*) are loose. *Walkabout* most certainly stands as the strangest

episode of the series so far, with references to Aborigine dream worlds and nanotechnology and a little Plato-like debate over humans and order thrown in for good convoluted measure. For once, one of the Pack remained interesting. Though Dingo had almost no charisma with the rest of the members, he held his own very well in this ep. Who'd have thought that one of the Pack would be the best thing about an episode? The Matrix also happened to be an sickeningly intriguing creation. The mere presence of something as new a concept as *The Matrix* kept things from being as boring as Goliath's other adventures. [B-/B]

Mark of the Panther

W: Marano
D: Woodyard
A: Koko/Anima Sam Won

The Travellers run into Elisa's mother in Nigeria, while a group of poachers hunt down a mysterious man with the ability to transform into a panther. This episode brings the always talented and always entertaining Lydia Marano back to the solo writing gig. The ep starts out kind of like a *Captain Planet* ep — complete with the rainforest setting and anti-poaching message, but still had a lot of momentum going in; *Gargoyles* has to be one of the VERY few shows outside of *Captain Planet* that would dare spend 10 minutes of episode time on some foreign story. From then on, the parents-talking-about-children-and-vice-versa discussions aren't bad, but a more inspired writer would've done it better. [B-/B]

Pendragon

W: Marano
D: Woodyard
A: Sunwoo

Pendragon puts the audience back in New York, with a nasty Big Apple twist for T.S. White's *The Once and Future King*. Arthur Pendragon, whom we last saw leaving Avalon to go on his own solo trip, searches for Excalibur and winds up meeting Grif, our British Garogyle friend from *M.I.A.* Both are sent to Manhattan, where they meet our New York clan and an ambitious Macbeth. *Pendragon* was penned by Lydia C. Marano, but this ep doesn't have any of the smooth flavor of her other solo works, however, thanks mainly to the lack of a truly appealing character. Most disappointing are Grif and Arthur, who have a chance to really hit it off as a team, but come across as dry. Still, the creative decision by Marano to keep the identity of the rightful owner of Excalibur up in the air is a good one. [B-]

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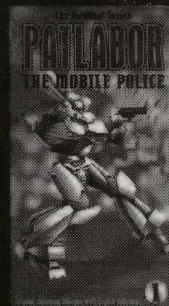
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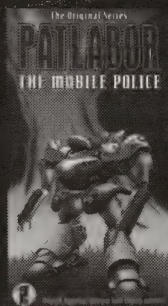
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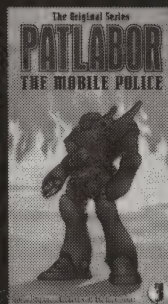
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Eye of the Storm

W: Bates

D: Kline

A: Sun Min

The Travellers are in Norway, where Goliath uses the Eye of Odin on himself to deal with the Norse god, Odin, who has come to reclaim his possession. The conflict between Odin and Goliath and the various plot twists that keep the story from becoming too standard are very admirable, as are the Scandinavian bystanders the group meets. The highlight of the animation was the color scheme, which features some beautiful Arctic landscapes that effectively compliment the boldness of some of the characters getups (including Goliath's heavy armor). The only disappointing elements are the cutoff points of the episode's great potential—specifically the human bystanders who deserve more dialogue between them and the Travellers and the climax. Cary Bates distinct writing

flavor also seems to be missing for the most part. [B-/B]

The New Olympians

W: Gilad

D: Kline

A: Sunwoo

The Travellers arrive at an isolated civilization where descendants of Greek mythological players reside in their haven away from humans. Though the anti-human sentiments and one-episode story keep us from getting too involved in the magnificent setting, the characters and artwork are interesting enough to hold our attention through even the most hackneyed plot elements. Most appealing are Taurus (the Minotaur descendant that serves as the chief of law enforcement) and Proteus (a shape-shifting killer with plans to literally blow the roof off the city). *NO* takes the minor prize of being the best Adam Gilad-written episode

of the series. [B-/B]

The Green

W: Bates

D: Terada and Kawamura

A: WD-Japan

The Travellers arrive in a Yucatan rainforest under the protection of a group of Mexican gargoyle clan, which is about to be destroyed by a Cyber-Biotics joint venture with Jackal and Hyena. These "message episodes" tend to make me nervous as a viewer, but the episode itself is only half-preachy. Bates' writing in this ep, isn't even close to his better stuff in *Double Jeopardy* and *Silver Falcon*, due to the lack of verbal spice. The only real treat is the presence of Hector Elizondo as the voice of the clan leader, who's return to animation (after his voice work on *Dark Water*) is pleasant indeed. Sure, this episode is one step above *Captain Planet*, but there are better ways to handle an



all of this propulsion has a nasty habit of getting in the way of character depth and viewer acceptance of the rapid-fire insertion of plot elements. The choppy, uninspired animation and directing in this episode is also, sadly, among the worst of the series. [B]

Ill Met by Moonlight

S: M. Reaves
T: Duane and Morwood
D: Woodyard
A: A-Ya

The Travellers find themselves back on Avalon, where Oberon has returned to reclaim his old land. This episode is filled with story concepts that despite their flaws still manage to remain engaging. The infamous "exposition mode" for dialogue shows up again when Oberon and his wife, Titania, explain their background; the issue of

episode of this type. [C+]

Sentinel

W: Bates
D: Kline
A: Koko/DY

On Easter Island, the Travellers encounter an alien warrior using the island as a post in a long-finished intergalactic war. It's bad enough that the general premise for the episode is ridiculous enough (even more so than the no-less-peculiar *Walkabout*), but its execution is even worse. The stubbornness of our alien friend becomes annoying real quick, but Bates still needed a two-minute long dissertation to explain the background of the alien (using Angela, no less). I choose not to mention Elisa's bout with amnesia, that comes across so laughably unbelievable that one assumes Bates was being deliberate in its stupidity. Maybe that's why I stayed interested throughout the whole tiresome ordeal. [C/C+]

Bushido

W: Sperling
D: Woodyard
A: Tama/Jade

The Travellers arrive in a Japanese village protected by a clan of gargoyles, who may now

become the main attraction of a gargoyle-related theme park. The character animation is quite schizophrenic, at times impressively and effectively handling subtle movements, and other times slogging along at a lethargic pace. The development of the Ishimura clan is handled relatively well (especially the leader, Taro, who is even more appealingly brooding than Goliath), and the deliberate pacing keeps the events more involving than the otherwise superficial story would make them. If anything, the story needs more of the Japanese clan and less of the theme park potshots. [C+/B-]

Cloud Fathers

W: Marano
D: Woodyard
A: Koko

The Travellers arrive in Arizona, where a tribal icon of the Hopi nation is causing trouble for Xanatos, as well as Elisa's father and sister. The first post-Avalon ep to be truly and thoroughly entertaining, writer Marano weaves her magic again by spinning appealing character personalities from the Coyote spirit and the Mazzas. Not only that, the showdowns between Xanatos and Goliath have some of the snappiest dialogue and execution in the series, which only serve to propel the plot even more. Of course,

whether or not Oberon has right to the land becomes a thirty-second argument; the confrontation between Oberon and the good guys is little more than a long chase scene. Still, these elements (by virtue of appealing character dialogue and often sensational animation) are executed well enough to keep the audience involved throughout the episode. (Note to the voice directors and writers: Unless it's intentional, don't recycle voices, eh?)

(Side Note: According to this episode's co-adaptor, Diane Duane, writers have little say over the voice casting. Their influence ends at the suggestion box.) [B-/B]

Future Tense

S: M. Reaves
D: Kline
T: Skir & Isenburg
A: WD-Japan

See if this premise rings a bell: The Travellers arrive in New York 2035, where Xanatos is the all-powerful dictator and the rest of the NY clan are rebels. *FT* gives Robert Skir and Marty Isenburg another run for their writing money as they competently handle (yet generally ruin) a potentially powerful Michael Reaves story. Plenty of outstanding story concepts, but their execution leaves much to be desired for the



most part. In the 20-minute format, the story elements are tossed in and out like so much garbage, so some truly engaging moments lose their impact very quickly. Be on your guard, though, for some of the series' very best animation, as well as some of its most disturbing images. [B-/B]

The Gathering 1

W: Marano
A: Koko/DY
D: Kline

Fox and Xanatos' son is being sought by Oberon, who is in the midst of Gathering all of his children. One can only hope that in an episode with plot ramifications this big, the handling of the story will be palatable. Who'da thunk that a talented writer like Marano could have botched both Oberon's Gathering and the Travellers return to New York? At least the rest of the plot elements are managed well, considering how much is just thrown into this episode anyway. [C+]

The Gathering 2

S: Marano
A: Koko/Seoul
T: Marano & Sperling
D: Kline

Refusing to be denied custody of Alexander, Oberon attempts to break into the Xanatos Building. Whereas the first part felt

crammed by too many story threads, this second part makes up the time with overextended action scenes (the first half of the episode is focused on Oberon's attack on the Xanatos Building) which takes away time from scenes which should have received more attention (the conversations between Xanatos and his father). Puck's exposition is far from mundane, though it doesn't come off as funny as intended; and Fox's big revelation (with shades of *ExoSquad*) is so overdone — In fact, it's hard to imagine a show where I haven't seen such an execution. [B-]

Vendettas

W: Bates
A: Anima SW
D: Kline

Wolf and Hacon's spirit face off with Goliath and Hudson, while a disgruntled series extra seeks his revenge. The thread involving the extra (who has played the role of punching bag throughout the series) starts out with quite a bit of momentum, but sinks incredibly fast into an eyerolling series of cartoon pratfalls. I'd rather not even bring up the wasted Wolf and Hacon characters (dull enough as is) resigned to fight endless battles through a good 3/4 of the episode (with only exposition to break up the fighting). Since neither thread is strong enough to stand on its own, do ya feel the need to string 'em both together? As for the ridiculous ending: Sure you weren't expecting it... the same way I

wasn't expecting this episode as bad. [C-]

Turf

W: Skir & Isenburg
A: Sunwoo
D: Kline

Think Gargoyles can go one worse than *M.I.A.* and *Vendettas*? Angela and the Gargoyle "kids" get caught up in a turf war between Dracon and the Czech gang from *Golem*. Wouldn't you know that the members of both gangs are as flat and lifeless as the plot surrounding them? Gotta love that rudimentary police work, which all but lets the gangs do their own city-wrecking, despite some pretty lame undercover work by Elisa. But always at the center of this throwaway episode is the bickering between the hatchlings over Angela; squabbling so juvenile and uninspired combined with an execution so formulaic that I'm surprised it even made it onto such a high-minded series as *Gargoyles*. Hard to believe that the Skir-Isenburg team could sink so low. [D+/C-]

The Reckoning

S: Marano
D: Woodyard
T: Sperling
A:

Demona faces Angela for the first time, and Thailog and Servarius have special plans for the Gargoyles in this all- get-out episode, which in many ways is similar to the first season finale, *Reawakening*. The creative staff shines with a fantastic script and able directing that keeps the audience emotionally glued to the plot twists and turns. Sperling does a marvelous job adapting a typically entertaining Marano story with snappy dialogue, even if a few of the plot elements near the end of the story suffer under writing shortcuts (Is Demona dead?). As if the episode couldn't be more engrossing, we have an unbeatably entertaining gallery of rogues, the likes of which include Dr. Sevarius, Fang, and the best bad guy on TV, Thailog ("My clan can beat your clan...any day of the week"). [B+]

Possession

W: Cary Bates
A: Koko/DY
D: Woodyard

Okay, Mr. Bates. I'm assuming that no one minds a "clone" episode, a "parody" episode, an "alien invader" episode, and now a "who's who?" episode for such an innovative series as *Gargoyles*? (Michael Reaves already got the "nightmare future" episode.) Coldstone returns, and things get confusing when Puck teaches



Alexander a course in soul transference. This is one of those instances when you may roll your eyes at the hammy deliveries or roll on the floor laughing at the attempts each voice actor makes at attempting another's mannerisms. Since little effort is given to involve the audience dramatically in these events, the only other resort is comedy, where the episode does work. When all is said and done, however, very little of this episode is memorable. [B-]

Hunter's Moon 1

W: M. Reaves
A: A-Ya/MSun
D: Woodyard

The Gargoyles encounter a new set of foes, the oh-so marketable Hunters, who have vowed to exterminate all Gargoyles on the planet. The "day-in-the-life-of" material here gives this episode a great deal of depth (something more Gargoyles episodes should have). The humor in the episode, however, treads the line between eye-rolling and enjoyable. Accepting Demona's "loud" performance as entertainment instead of drama

will make it palatable, and accepting the plot events here on their own merit (instead of as a set-up for a big finale) will make the episode seem less disappointing. [B-/B]

Hunter's Moon 2

W: M. Reaves
A: WD-Japan
D: Woodyard

Demona hints at her plan for the Hunter's Moon, while she, Goliath, Brooklyn, and Lexington are captured by the Hunters. Despite the enormous appeal of the high-minded elements of this miniseries, the executional flaws become more apparent here. The handling of Goliath's emotions (through his relationship with Elisa and his hatred of the Hunters) are great to see, but they still come across rather explicitly. Demona gives a half-and-half performance that combines her always tiresome comic-book rantings to much more appealing rationalization. And if you don't mind *heavy* Scottish accents, you love the extended conversations between the Hunters. [B-/B]

Hunter's Moon 3

W: M. Reaves
A: WD-Japan
D: Woodyard

Goliath and the Hunters have their final confrontations and Demona's master plan is revealed in this unofficial series conclusion. This final part continues the often overbearing emotions of Goliath as he tries to control his sadness and rage in increasingly explicit ways. The events regarding the fate of Elisa and John come across as contrived, which leads the way for the two angry groups to clash in a final battle that never becomes very involving because of its formulaic feel. I choose not to bring up the way in which Reaves leaves the door open for future stories. Decent story concepts and often sensational animation keep things from completely falling apart, but on the whole, *The Reckoning* made a better season finale. [B-]

Terrence Briggs is an animation fan whose wit and wisdom is frequently seen in the animation newsgroup on the Internet.

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A PREVIEW OF GARGOYLES: THE GOLIATH CHRONICLES

After their first and second seasons on *The Disney Afternoon*, the Gargoyles returned for a series of all-new adventures, entitled *Gargoyles: The Goliath Chronicles*, which premiered Saturday, September 7th on ABC. *Gargoyles: The Goliath Chronicles* provides additional chapters in this saga for network television.

In these thirteen new episodes, awareness of the Gargoyles spreads beyond the small circle of friends and arch-enemies revealed in the first two seasons — creating chaos and panic in New York City. Goliath and his small clan of Gargoyle warriors must now contend with a growing anti-gargoyle faction called the Quarrymen. Organized and bitterly hostile, the Quarrymen will stop at nothing until the Gargoyles are captured.

The original series, *Gargoyles*, continues to air Mondays through Fridays in syndication on *The Disney Afternoon*. All 65 episodes of the series will air sequentially so that viewers can again follow the complete story of the Gargoyles — from their beginnings as nighttime guardians of a medieval Scottish castle to their modern-day adventures in 20th century Manhattan.

Gargoyles: The Goliath Chronicles continues the epic saga of heroic creatures — stone statues by day, defenders of the night. Last season's on-going storyline came to a dramatic climax in a three-part episode entitled, *Hunter's Moon*, leaving these compelling characters poised for a new series on ABC.

That trilogy brought full-circle the story of a medieval youth who, after being attacked by Demona, swore he would destroy the gargoyle villainess — and all of her kind. Demona eluded this "Hunter," but his descendants have vowed to carry out his vendetta. Jason, Jon and Robyn Canmore trace her to Manhattan, and discover that she isn't the only gargoyle still alive. They learn of Goliath and his clan's existence, and will stop at nothing to destroy them.

Previously known only to a small group of humans, including their friend and protector, Detective Elisa Maza and the manipulative industrialist, David Xanatos, these creatures of honor are revealed to the public while thwarting a band of muggers aboard the New York City subway. Commuters flee from the physically grotesque, winged gargoyles, and the media

reports our heroes to be assailants, rather than Samaritans.

Unlike her fellow gargoyles who turn to stone at dawn, Demona changes instead into a human. By day, she assumes the cover of Dominique Destine, CEO of a high-tech, corporate entity appropriately titled Nightstone, and her sole objective is to exterminate the human species. When the moon reaches its full phase (Hunter's Moon), with the help of the nefarious geneticist, Dr. Sevarius, Demona will combine two extremely potent chemicals and create a lethal gas that will rid the planet of all mankind. The gargoyles, however, will be protected by a magic spell. The necessary chemicals are stored on different sides of the city in warehouses owned by Xanatos Enterprises.

Learning of Demona's plan, the gargoyles deploy to Manhattan's east and west sides. Brooklyn, Broadway, Lexington and Bronx lie in wait as Demona breaks into the warehouse on the westside. A vicious battle ensues, but she escapes with the chemicals. On the eastside, Goliath, Hudson, and Goliath's daughter, Angela, are ambushed by the Hunters, and Angela is seriously wounded. A furious Goliath roars: "They call themselves the hunters, but I swear they will be my prey!"

Meanwhile, Elisa Maza is taken off her nighttime detail to work the day shift with a rookie detective, Jason Conover. Her new partner is fascinated with the Gargoyle sightings, and Elisa is surprised to find that she is attracted to the dynamic Jason — unaware that he is, of course, one of the Hunters. When Goliath discovers what appears to be Elisa's blossoming relationship, he, too, is surprised at the hurt feelings and jealousy that he experiences.

Eventually, the Gargoyles, the Hunters,



reporters, civilians, SWAT teams and the NYPD Gargoyles Task Force close in on Manhattan's condemned St. Damien's Cathedral — ground zero for Demona's plan. Goliath risks his own life — and that of all gargoyles — by smashing the talisman Demona used to cast the protective spell. She throws the vial of lethal chemicals into the air and escapes; Goliath lunges to catch the vial before it can shatter, thus saving humanity and convincing the Hunters that not all gargoyles are evil.

In another surprising change of heart and mind, Xanatos comes to the gargoyles' rescue in a helicopter as crowds below St. Damien's riot, demanding the capture of what they perceive to be horrific beasts. Xanatos declares the bitter feud with Goliath ended — no strings, no tricks. Grateful to Goliath, he offers the gargoyles sanctuary in their ancestral home, Castle Wyvern, which sits atop his corporate headquarters.



Information courtesy of Disney Television



Writing for Gargoyles

Michael Reaves enjoys his work for the Disney action series

by David S. Serchay

For over twenty years, Michael Reaves had been writing for television. His credits include a number of animated and live action programs. In addition he has worked on several movies and novels, and is currently the story editor and head writer on the Disney TV cartoon *Gargoyles*.

Reaves describes the show as being about "a race of beings who lived in the Middle Ages. They are stone by day and flesh by night, and their mission is to guard a Scottish Castle and it's human inhabitants. Wrongly cursed by a magician, they sleep for a thousand years and awaken in present day Manhattan where they become the guardians of the modern-day night."

The impressive vocal cast is made up of Keith David as the leader Goliath, veteran actor Ed Asner as Hudson, the eldest and former leader of the clan (other than Goliath, none of the good Gargoyles had names until they awoke in modern times and took them), Thom Adcox Hernandez as the inventive Lexington, Jeff Bennett as Brooklyn, *Coach*'s Bill Fagerbakke the always hungry Broadway, and Frank Welker as Bronx, the Gargoyle "Dog."

Helping them in their strange new world is police detective Elisa Maza "voiced" by Salli Richardson. Former *Star Trek: The Next Generation* actors Jonathan Frakes and Marina Sirtis provide the voices of the show's two main villains — millionaire David Xanatos and a human-hating Gargoyle, Demona.

Premiering in 1994, and airing on a weekly basis, *Gargoyles* began a new show on ABC. Reaves currently lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Brynne Chandler Reaves.

ANIMATO! : How long have you been writing for TV?

Michael Reaves: Far too long. No, not really; after all, even at its worst writing still beats working for a living. I sold my first TV script in 1975, to a Saturday morning live-action show called *The Secrets Of Isis*. I promptly quit my job (I was working at the complaint department at Sears) and haven't had to punch a time clock since.

A! : What else have you worked on?

MR: I've worked on dozens of animated series, including *The Real Ghostbusters*, *Centurions*, *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Starcom*, *Conan and the Young Warriors*, *Cadillacs and Dinosaurs*,

Phantom 2040, *Batman: The Animated Series* [and] those are just the ones that come to mind immediately. I've also written for live-action shows, including *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, *Twilight Zone* (the "new" version), *Monsters*, *Captain Power*, *The Flash*, and *Father Dowling Mysteries*. Movies include *Full Eclipse* (written with Richard Christian Matheson), *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm* (with Alan Burnett, Paul Dini, and Martin Pasko), and *Gargoyles*. I've also written novels, short stories, and comic books. My most arcane writing credit to date, I think, was writing dialogue for a Megadeath rock video.

A! : A rock video? Which one?

MR: I think the video was called *Hanger 18*; I confess, I've never seen the finished cut. The director, Paul Boyington, was someone I'd worked with before, and he asked me to come up with a few lines of dialogue for a character in the video who looked like a skeleton in chains. That's all I remember about it, frankly. I don't even know if what I wrote made it into the final cut. I just did it because it was easy money, a couple of hundred bucks for an hour's work, and primarily because it seemed an amusing addition to my resume.

A! : And the comic books?

MR: I've written a few issues for DC and Eclipse, and a couple of comic features for *Disney Adventures Magazine*. I did an issue of *Teen Titans Spotlight* (#14) that feature Nightwing, when Marv Wolfman was the editor. I wrote a couple of issues of *The Batman Adventures* [though] only one was published, and they had the regular writer on the series rewrite me, so I just took story credit. I [also] wrote three or four issues of a comic called *Fusion* for Eclipse.

A! : Of all the writing that you have done, do you have any favorite stories?

MR: Favorite episodes of *Gargoyles*, or just in general? [With *Gargoyles*], I'm quite happy with most of them. The five-part pilot, *Awakening*, contains some of the best animation I've seen on TV. I'm also very happy with *Deadly Force*, because we dealt with a controversial subject without diluting the impact. [Another] episode that I storyedited, *A Lighthouse In the Sea of Time*, written by Brynne Chandler Reaves and Lydia C. Marano, deals with literacy in a very moving way. I'm proud of it.

A! : And other than *Gargoyles*?

MR: Well, I'm pretty happy with most of the *B:TAS* episodes I wrote or edited. *I thought I Am the Night* came out real well. *Read My Lips* was a delightfully sick and twisted story. *Dreams In Darkness*, *Perchance To Dream*, *A Bullet For Bullock* ... all these pushed the envelope in animation storytelling. And I enjoyed working on *Phantom 2040* with Gar and Judy Reeves-Stevens. I'm not going to look back any further than that. I've written and/or storyedited hundreds of animation scripts; the vast majority I feel sort of neutral about, some I shudder even at the memory of, and some I'm quite happy with. But it would take too long to wade through them. I do remember writing for a toy-based series back in the mid-80's called *Centurions* which was a lot of fun. Ted Pedersen was the story editor, and he was easy to work with. I never had to do a rewrite. And, hard as it is to believe, two shows I worked on for DIC were a lot of fun: *The Real Ghostbusters* and *Starcom*. Brynne was the story editor on the latter. On *TRGB* I did a pastiche on Lovecraft called *The Collect Call Of Cthulhu*, which has become something of a minor cult classic, I'm told.

A! : You said that your wife also writes for *Gargoyles*. Do you often work together?

MR: Brynne has quite a few animated TV credits as both writer and story editor, including *Dungeons and Dragons*, *Starcom*, *Phantom: 2040*, *Conan and the Young Warriors*, and *Batman: TAS*. And *Gargoyles*, of course. We haven't collaborated too often on scripts as writing partners, but we've worked for each other when one or the other of us has storyedited series.

A! : What exactly is the role of a story editor?

MR: A story editor's job (in animation; the title is somewhat different in live-action or features) is to hire writers to write episodes and to make sure, either by giving notes, doing rewrites or both, that the scripts turned in conform to the overall vision of the series. Depending on the show, his/her duties can also include sitting in on casting and voice sessions, discussing preproduction and model designs, and other aspects of production.

A! : How much input do you usually provide for casting the voices?

MR: How much input the writer has on production can vary from show to show. On



B:TAS, for example, writers were not consulted on casting or allowed to go to recording sessions. On *Gargoyles* it's just the opposite; I was very much involved in the casting, I go to recording sessions and give input on line readings, I'm sent copies of the storyboards and expected to give notes; in short, I'm functioning very much like an associate producer, though my title is story editor.

A! : Besides Asner, Frakes, and Sirtis, there have been a lot of big name guest stars. For example, the voices of the reoccurring characters *The Pack*, include Clancy Brown and Matt Frewer. Were these the people that you had wanted?

MR: They were our first choices for the roles, and they happened to be available. Obviously, availability is a key factor.

A! : Who else has appeared on *Gargoyles*?

MR: ...Brent Spiner, Kate Mulgrew, Avery Brooks and others from the *Star Trek* shows, as well as Tim Curry, Paul Winfield, Sheena Easton, Brigitte Bako, Xander Berkely, Emma Samms, Roger Rees ... "more stars than there are in Heaven," as MGM used to put it. [Note for *Star Trek* fans: Michael Dorn and Nichelle Nichols have also made appearances.]

A! : Speaking of which, do you find that more on-screen actors have been doing voice work for cartoons?

MR: I think animation has certainly become a more respectable venue, thanks to shows like *B:TAS* and *Gargoyles*. And actors love voice work ... they don't have to get made up, remember their lines, worry about hitting their marks ... as Adrienne Barbeau once told me, "I'd a lot rather play Catwoman this way [on *B:TAS*] than have to kickbox in six-inch high

heels".

A! : Xanatos bears some resemblance to Jonathan Frakes. Was this deliberate?

MR: No. The character model was designed long before we cast Jonathan. A lot of people have remarked on the resemblance between certain characters and their voice actors, but none of it was intentional.

A! : Have you noticed that more adults seem to be watching cartoons? If so, do you get any correspondence from them?

MR: I get quite a lot of e-mail and regular mail from adult fans of animation. I think it's a demographic that, in this country, is sadly undervalued. In America, animation is still automatically associated with selling toys or fluffy pink bunnies traipsing merrily through the meadow. Only Disney features are perceived as having an appeal to both adults and kids. But I think the recent interest in anime and the success of shows like *B:TAS* and *Gargoyles* might help point out that it's a viable medium for telling stories you could never hope to produce in live action.

A! : You've gone on-line, and even this interview was conducted via e-mail. What's your opinion of the fans on BBS's like America On-Line and the Internet?

MR: I find most of them to be bright, articulate and enjoyable. I drop in regularly on various folders and forums because, aside from meeting interesting people, it's an invaluable way to get immediate feedback from all over the world. It's all too easy to get sequestered in the entertainment business; on-line services provide a way to keep in touch with what people like to see.

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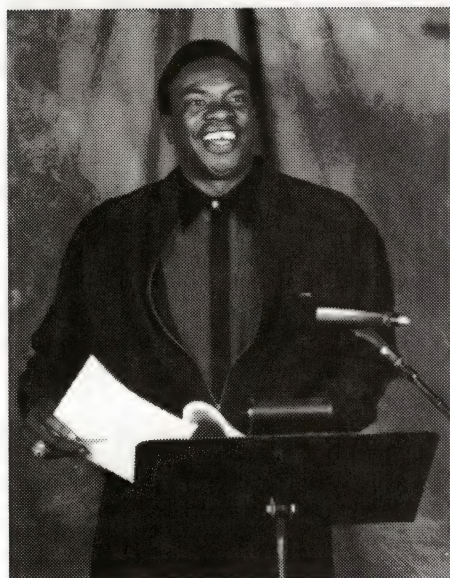
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Gargoyles employ quite a number of voice actors, and here's the leading performers...

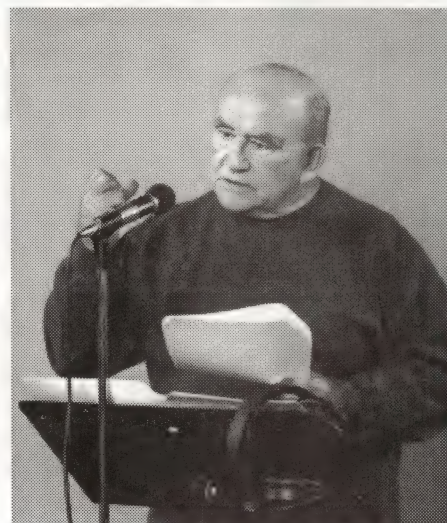
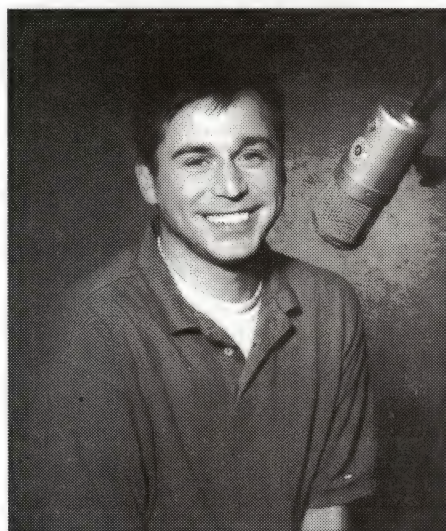


KEITH DAVID (Goliath) Nominated for a 1995 Emmy award for his portrayal of the character Goliath, Keith David's extraordinary range of talent is evidenced by his recent body of work. Currently starring in the smash stage hit, *Seven Guitars*, David recently starred in Spike Lee's *Clockers*, and *Dead Presidents* for the Hughes brothers, both for which he received critical acclaim.

A graduate of the Julliard School, David won a Tony nomination for his role as Chimney Man in the critically acclaimed Broadway musical *Jelly's Last Jam*. His many theatrical productions include Athol Fugard's *Boesman and Lena* at the Manhattan Theatre Club and Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*, opposite Christopher Walken, at the Joseph Papp Public Theatre.



SALLI RICHARDSON (Elisa Maza) is a Chicago-born actress-singer who is equally at home on stage, in film, and on television. She most recently appeared in the feature film, *The Great White Hype* with Samuel Jackson and HBO's *Soul of the Game* with Blair Underwood. Additional film credits include *When We Were Colored*, directed by Tim Reid and *Low Down Dirty Shame*, in which she starred opposite writer/director Keenan Ivory Wayans. In addition to recording the ballad for the feature film *Posse*, she also starred opposite Mario Van Peebles and Blair Underwood in the Van Peebles-directed film.

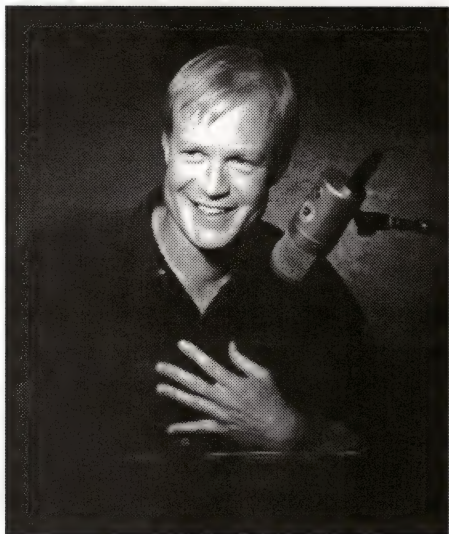


EDWARD ASNER (Hudson) is perhaps best known for his award-winning comedic and dramatic portrayal of journalist Lou Grant. Originating the role of the grumpy boss with the heart of gold on the smash comedy *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, Asner won Emmys in 1971, 1972 and 1975, and garnered the same award for the same character in 1978 and again in 1980 on the highly acclaimed dramatic series *Lou Grant*. He has also won two Emmys for his work in the landmark mini-series, *Rich Man, Poor Man* and *Roots*.

Currently, Asner is in production on a film for Dennis Cooper entitled, *Prep*. He recently guest-starred in the season finale of *Mad About You* with Paul Reiser and Helen Hunt, and was seen in the Showtime movie, *Heads* and the acclaimed CBS production of *Gypsy*.

THOM ADCOX-HERNANDEZ (Lexington) has guest-starred on such television series as *Family Matters*, *The Tracey Ullman Show*, *Homefront*, and *Our House*. His movie-of-the-week credits include *I Saw What You Did*, *Liberace*, *Under Fire*, and *My Life as a Babysitter*. He also had a recurring guest role as Brian on the drama series *Falcon Crest*. Feature films include *For the Boys* with Bette Midler, *Popcorn*, *Lethal Pursuit* and *Whit and Charm*.

Adcox can be seen in several soon-to-be-released feature films including *It Came from Outer Space*, and *Dorothy Day* with Martin Sheen and Moira Kelly.



BILL FAGERBAKKE (Broadway) stars as football player-assistant coach Dauber Daubinski on the ABC hit comedy series, *Coach*. He can also be heard as the voice of The Oafish Soldier in Disney's newest animated feature, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*. In 1994, Fagerbakke starred as the slow-witted reluctant hero, Tom Cullen, in the ABC miniseries, *The Stand*, based on the novel by Stephen King.

A former football player-turned acting student, he has appeared in numerous theatre productions, including Broadway's *The Musical Comedy Murders of 1940*, and in the feature films *Funny Farm*, *The Secret of My Success*, and *Loose Cannons*.



JONATHAN FRAKES (David Xanatos) makes his directorial debut this year on *Star Trek: First Contact*, a feature film in which he also co-stars. Frakes spent seven successful seasons starring as Commander William Riker in the popular science-fiction series *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. He also appeared alongside other cast members in a four-city tour of Tom Stoppard's drama, *Every Good Boy Deserves Favour*. Together with his wife Genie Francis, Frakes appeared in *Heaven & Hell*, Part III of the successful ABC miniseries, *North & South*.

During the third season of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, Frakes made directed an episode of the series entitled *The Offspring*, and has since directed episodes for *Voyager* and *Deep Space Nine*. Frakes reprised his role in the feature film, *Star Trek: Generations*, based on the popular series.

JEFF BENNETT (Brooklyn) has extensive experience in providing voices for animation projects and commercials. For Disney, he has lent his talents to *Mighty Ducks*, Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, *Raw Toonage*, *Bonkers* and Disney's *Aladdin*. Other animated series include *Animaniacs*, *Batman*, and *Tiny Toons* for Warner Brothers, *Captain Planet* and *Where's Waldo?* for DIC, and *Secret Squirrel* for Hanna Barbera.

MARINA SIRTIS (Deanna Troi) recreates the role of Counselor Deanna Troi for the eighth *Star Trek* feature, *Star Trek: First Contact*, a role which she portrayed for seven seasons on the popular syndicated series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. She also recreated the role for the feature film *Star Trek: Generations*, for Paramount Pictures.

Born in London, Sirtis studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama and became a member of the Worthing Repertory Theatre. After working regularly in her native city on the stage and screen and in television, she moved to the U.S. in 1986. Her feature film credits include *The Wicked Lady* with Faye Dunaway, *Death Wish III* opposite Charles Bronson, *Waxwork II: Lost in Time*, *Blind Date* and Richard Donner's *The Thief of Baghdad*. Sirtis revealed her considerable vocal talents in a European tour of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* and has several television credits, including PBS' *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* opposite Jeremy Brett and the BBC feature, *One Last Chance*. 

Turner In TOONTOWN

Cats Don't Dance is the newest production from the fledgling feature animation unit of Turner Broadcasting

by Mike Lyons

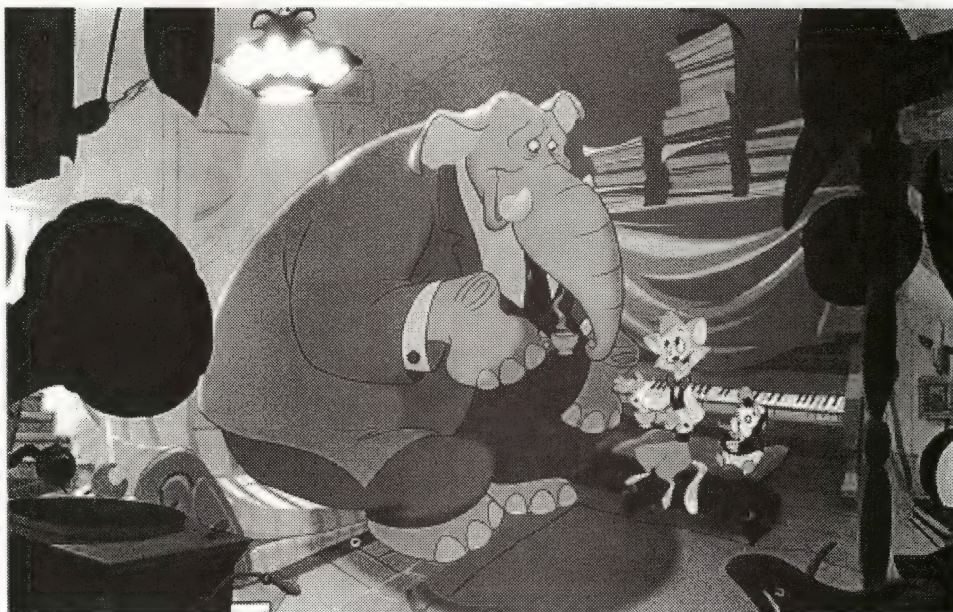
For Turner Feature Animation, life is going to imitate art. The burgeoning studio's newest animated feature, *Cats Don't Dance*, is a salute to the Hollywood musicals of yesteryear, stressing the theme of pursuing a dream despite any obstacles. This could also be the theme of Turner Feature Animation itself; a David going up against Goliaths. *Cats Don't Dance* art director Brian McEntee, (who served the same role on Disney's *Beauty and the Beast*), says, "Thematically, *Cats Don't Dance* is about achieving your dreams and achieving them against impossible odds. In some ways it's similar to Turner Feature Animation trying to compete in feature animation. Everyone says, 'Well, Disney's the only one who can compete', but I think we have a shot and we're going after our dreams."

Elizabeth Cantillon, Executive Vice President of Turner Feature Animation, says, "I don't feel like we're competing with Disney. That's the mistake that people make, as if they were going to win some battle between themselves and Disney. Disney is what they are; they set the standard, they created the business, the level of the artistry in their movies is beyond what anybody else is doing. So, I think the question for other studios entering into the business is 'What kind of movies can we make that will be our signature movies?'"

This is one of the goals of Turner Feature Animation, (TFA), one of the motion picture divisions of Turner Broadcasting System. Their previous foray into feature animation was 1994's *The Pagemaster*. Last September, Elizabeth Cantillon came aboard TFA after with an extensive background and discipline in live-action. Despite this, she didn't find the transition to the realm of pen and ink all that difficult. "Making movies is making movies," says Cantillon. "It's telling good stories. Whether you're telling them in live-action or animation, the values that are necessary to make it good are the same."

When Elizabeth joined the studio, *Cats Don't Dance* was already several years into its production, so she found she had to take a "crash course" in all aspects of animation. "The people working on *Cats* and the people working at TFA were incredibly generous, as far as educating me in the why and wherefores of animation production."

For Cantillon, one of the attractions of



The hero of *Cats Don't Dance*, Danny the cat from Kokomo, is seen in a quiet moment from the new animated back-stage musical comedy. (© 1997 Turner Pictures Inc.)

Cats Don't Dance was the fact that the film is very "un-Disney-like" and how it could, as she said, help TFA establish their own signature. "It's very spare, it's not as dense as the Disney features," she says. "It's more 'cartoony', it has more of a 'cartoony' look to it and less of a live-action look."

The director of *Cats Don't Dance*, Mark Dindal (formerly an effects animator at Disney, working on such films as *The Little Mermaid*) says that he and McIntee are not only going after a distinct look with the film, but a distinct "feel" as well. "Something that Brian and I loved was that there was a certain kind of magic to Walt Disney's early movies. There was a simplicity and a clarity and an emotional core to them and a sense of fun and a sense of fantasy," says Dindal, adding, "We hope to recapture that in this film and it will make us feel like we did when we saw those [Disney films] when we were younger."

Cat's Don't Dance tells the story of Danny, a cat from Kokomo, Indiana, who comes to Hollywood in the hopes of pursuing his dream of becoming a movie star. "He represents a naive hope, or an innocent hope that if you work hard and really pay your dues, you'll get your chance," says Dindal of the film's star. "He doesn't expect to run into what he runs into in town."

What Danny and his other animal friends

experience is prejudice (a la *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*) as no animals can get any leading roles in the movies. So, they all wind up working for child star Darla Dimple, who is as sweet as Shirley Temple on screen, but off screen is a pint sized tyrant. Dindal notes that it has been interesting to work with this unique villain, a "brat gone bad". "You can watch someone be really bad and sort of vicariously view from the sidelines, behavior in someone that you would never dream of doing yourself. It's sort of like stopping to look at an accident on a freeway. You just view it from the safety of your vantage point and you pass it by and you know it's horrible, and it's awful, but you can't help but look. They say that's the lure of a villain, because they break all the rules, they have no moral or no ethic and it's sort of seductive to watch someone be that way."

Darla, of course, is always on the lookout for anyone who might pose a threat to her status as the reigning miniature queen of Hollywood. When she sees Danny and the other animals as this threat, she sabotages one of their auditions, which leaves them without any jobs. Ah, but never fear, the animals will have their revenge and Hollywood will know Darla for the diabolical brat that she really is.

According to Dindal, the concept for this story is actually rooted in an old Tinseltown legend. "Rats were overrunning the Warner

Brothers Studio," explains the director. "They went out to the local pound and brought in all of these cats that nobody claimed to take care of this problem. There was a story that was based around that, but it evolved and evolved into the story that we now have."

To bring this "legend" to the screen in *Cat's Don't Dance*, Art Director McIntee knew that he had to employ a distinctive style. "Since we're doing an interpretation of Hollywood in the golden age of musicals," says McIntee, "we explored the art deco style as our springboard. What I liked about deco is that it's formal and elegant and clean, but at the same time is kind of dynamic, which relates really well to the tone of the story."

Once the design was in place, the filmmakers began casting *Cat's Don't Dance*. Taking a cue from other animation houses, TFA is using all-star voices to bring the characters to life. *Quantum Leap*'s Scott Bakula is the voice behind the film's star, Danny. Natalie Cole provides the singing voice of Danny's love interest, Sawyer, while the supporting characters of a soprano-singing hippo and a swashbuckling turtle are voiced by Kathy Najimy and Don Knotts, respectively.

Dindal says he knew from the outset that the voice actors would be a tremendous inspiration for the animators, so during the recording sessions, he encouraged improvisation. "We went in with our scripts," he says, adding, "But, when we got there, I put notes on the side for ad-libs. As they got to know their characters, every single one of them would make a suggestion; 'Well, maybe he could say this,' instead of what in the script may have been a dry line and not as colorful."

Another of the more famous names connected with *Cat's Don't Dance* is not one of the voice actors, but the film's choreographer: Gene Kelly. The late, great legend brought his unique talents and sensibilities to the film and Dindal notes that working along side him was an incredible experience. "The thing that really impressed me was that we would sit down and show him our storyboards and talk about what we were thinking and he would remember specifics in whatever film we'd ask him about. Some of them were forty years ago! I just think that's amazing." As someone who had worked along side Jerry Mouse in *Anchors Aweigh* (1945) and with Hanna Barbera on the TV special *Jack and the Beanstalk*, Kelly also brought a familiarity with animation to his role on the film. "I hope that we can dedicate the film to the spirit that he brought to the big dance musicals," says Dindal.

Unlike many of those classics musicals, *Cat's Don't Dance* has the opportunity to employ computers. "We're doing basically everything beyond the

actual clean-up animation drawings through a computer system," says art director McIntee. "So, we scan those drawings in and then we apply color to the line and the areas for the animation and we also scan in our hand painted backgrounds. We're able to do our camera moves and our compositing and all sorts of special effects, like tones and opacities, to give a richness to the look."

Computers are also used for other elements in the film, such as cars and a replica of Noah's Ark, (Darla's "movie within a movie" is entitled "Little Arch Angel"). Despite its dominance, director Dindal feels, like many, that computers are actually no real threat to traditional animation. "I think it's just another tool," he says "like the multiplane [camera] or xeroxing for *101 Dalmatians* was a new tool. It just gives you more possibilities to be creative in different ways."

In addition to such cutting edge technology, music is also added to the mix for *Cat's Don't Dance*, with a new score provided by Randy Newman. "There's a real sense of humor to them," says Dindal of the songs in the film. "They're fun, in his clever sort of way."

The film is just one of several projects currently in production at Turner Feature Animation. Two films, which were recently announced, are joint ventures between Turner and Warner Bros. The first will be *Ray Gunn*, a science fiction themed film about a detective in the future. The second will be a film that is actually very close to Ted Turner's heart, *Yellowstone Wolves* (working title), the true life story of wolves who were brought from Canada to live in Yellowstone Park, in an attempt to

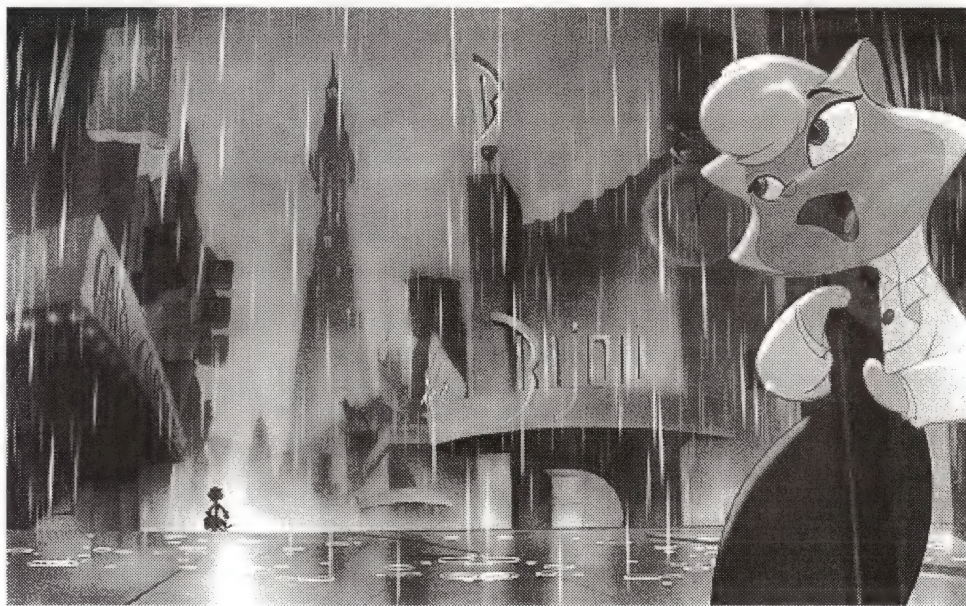
restore the species there.

Elizabeth Cantillon says that all of this activity in a medium that was almost considered extinct not that long ago has been very exciting and yet very competitive. "It's very competitive for artists," she explains. "Everybody wants to make great movies and it's just as if you were chasing after a great director or a great actor, because that's how your movie is going to be best realized."

"With Disney, they've pushed animation in a particular direction that I think is really successful for them," says Brian McIntee, "but there are other directions that you can go. At TFA, we're trying to do that, we're trying to go in a different direction, that I think for Disney, might be problematic for them to go, because they've mined really deeply into a narrow vein and they've mined it well. But, there are a lot of other places to go."



Long Island-based writer Mike Lyons is a frequent contributor to ANIMATO!



Look familiar? Well, the late Gene Kelly worked as a consultant on *Cats Don't Dance*. (© 1997 Turner Pictures Inc.)

WARNERS TRIES THEIR LUCK

The classic Warner Brothers characters, up-to-date animation technology, and Michael Jordan are the ingredients which will hopefully make Space Jam a success

by Glenn Anton

Technology is constantly taking motion picture animation to new levels. Now, with the November release of Warner Brothers feature film, *Space Jam*, it is time to bow before the god of technology once again. To Warner Brothers, the film (which at last check was a \$90 million production) is a rolling of the dice with the anticipation that the public will want to see the 21st Century version of the Looney Tunes.

When the public responded favorably to the Michael Jordan/Bugs Bunny *Hare Jordan* and *Hareospace Jordan* TV commercials a few years back, a lightbulb glared over the heads of the Warner Brothers executives. "Hey," they probably thought. "If the public likes watching a two minute commercial. They'd go ga-ga for a full-length motion picture."

In order to take a shot at the motion picture giant that is Walt Disney, the team at Warner Brothers have decided to release their own live action-animated feature film. True, the film is inspired by a TV commercial, but it is an original story.

That's not all, folks (yes, I'm going to fall for that shameless cliché). While the public might not be Mensa material (hey, if the public was intelligent why is *Baywatch* still running?) Warner Brothers knew that it would be smart to do more than just have Michael Jordan and Bugs pose and spew witty one-liners. Joe Pytko was brought in to direct and Ivan Reitman to produce the film - Reitman's list of hits include *Ghostbusters*, *Stripes*, *Twins*, *Dave*, and the animated cult film, *Heavy Metal*. The post-production and computer visual effects were created by Cinesite, whose founder, Ed Jones, received an Academy Award for *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*.

Besides Jordan, there are appearances by NBA stars Larry Bird, Charles Barkley, Patrick Ewing, Mugsy Bogues, Larry Johnson, and Shawn Bradley. Wayne Knight (*Seinfeld*), Theresa Randle (*Girl Six*), and Bill Murray also show up in the film.

As for the Looney Tunes, *Space Jam* does not just feature Bugs Bunny.

Or Bugs and Daffy.

Or Bugs, Daffy and Taz.

Viewers get to see Bugs, Daffy, Taz, Porky Pig, Sylvester, Tweety, Elmer Fudd, Yosemite Sam, Pepe LePew, Wile E. Coyote, Road Runner, and every other Looney Tune character that has appeared in a Warner Brothers cartoon.



Michael Jordan organizes his team before the biggest basketball game of the century in *Space Jam*. (TM & © Warner Bros. 1996)

That makes for a long cast list.

The voice talent chosen by Ivan Reitman is an interesting blend of old and new...and very new. Who else could Reitman choose to play Granny but June Foray, the woman who knows the character like nobody else? Dee Brown Baker voices Daffy and the all-important role of Bugs is portrayed by Billy West. West is best known not just for his pinpoint precision of mimicry but his versatility and innovative style. Besides doing voice work on numerous commercials, his past efforts have included voicing both Ren and Stimpy, as well as providing the voice of Doug on Nickelodeon's *Doug*.

Are you ready for the story line for *Space Jam*? The year is 1989 and Bugs Bunny, in classical smart-alec style, gets himself and his Looney Tunes brethren into a nasty predicament by accepting a challenge from the Nerducks, a grouchy gang of squeaky-voiced tiny space creatures who land on Earth. The Nerducks, dispatched by their boss, the ruthless Swackhammer, intend to kidnap the Looney Tunes to Moron Mountain, Swackhammer's failing theme park on the Nerdluck's boring

planet.

Bugs and the Looney Tunes must play the small, weak Nerducks in a game of basketball - if Wayne Gretzky was going to star opposite Bugs, it probably would've been a game of hockey. If the Looney Tunes win the basketball game, they can remain on Earth. If the aliens win, the Looney Tunes must bid farewell to the planet Earth and forfeit their freedom and become the possession of Swackhammer whereby they will be forced to do whatever he commands.

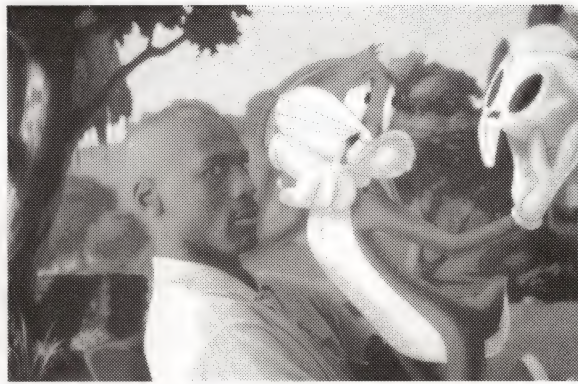
What Bugs does not know is that the Nerducks can instantly absorb skills - even basketball skills. The Nerducks siphon the basketball talent from some of the best in the business, turning the weak aliens into the powerful, speedy, and monstrously gifted Monstars.

Can you guess Bugs' reaction when he discovers that he and the other Looney Tunes aren't playing a team full of cartoon versions of Gary Coleman? Bugs realizes he needs help, and he immediately goes looking for it. There's only one person he knows of who can save the Looney Tunes. Where does Bugs go to find that



Like the classical Warner cartoons, *Space Jam* is full of topical humor, such as this reference to *Pulp Fiction*. (TM & © Warner Bros. 1996)

a further boost to their look. Although the Looney Tunes are given their classic appearance in regards to their attitude and actions, the film itself is very modern. Joe Pytko's direction has given *Space Jam* a very active camera, with dynamic staging and dazzling movement. Ivan Reitman wanted



Bugs knew this poor rabbit well; Jordan and his famous co-star (TM & © Warner Bros. 1996)

person? The golf course. Where else would you find Michael Jordan?

Basketball's most perfect player has retired from the sport (it's 1989, remember?) and he's now playing baseball (if you have an open mind). The Looney Tunes manage to get Jordan off the golf course - in a slightly unusual manner - and over to Looney Tunes Land so they can better explain their predicament. Jordan agrees to help Bugs and company (...you didn't think he'd say no and ruin the story?).

But helping the Looney Tunes learn the fine nuances of basketball is far from an easy task. Yosemite Sam can't "shoot" a basketball to save his life. Taz is literally uncontrollable and Wile E. Coyote has only the Road Runner on his mind. Basically, Jordan is facing a situation that is essentially total chaos on and off the court.

When everything seems lost, a glimmer of hope appears. It's the newest Looney Tune. The gorgeous Lola Bunny, a slam-dunking basketball machine and the object of the love-struck Bugs' desire.

Can the combination of Michael Jordan and the Tune Squad fight off the Monstars - otherwise known as the Mean Team - and ensure their futures on planet Earth? Could this be the true story of how Michael Jordan returned to basketball?

Whatever happens in *Space Jam* had to look believable, said Bill Perkins, special effects designer. When a basketball bounces on the stadium floor, the audience might not realize that the floor is a computer graphic...the floor has a realistic polished sheen that reflects the overhead lights.

"It has to propel the audience into living what they're seeing," explained Perkins. "The live-action, animation, CGI combinations will hopefully move through seamlessly so it will draw the audience into a completely different reality. It has to be cartoon and caricature, but have a certain sense of realism to it."

Because so much of *Space Jam* takes place in the real world, the animated characters needed

all of the animated characters to look like they were being lit by movie lights, so Bill Perkins and the effects team created a process of tone matting which defined the brighter areas where light is striking the character and the darker areas where the character is more in shade.



Voice actor veteran Billy West essays the role of Bugs Bunny in *Space Jam*. (TM & © Warner Bros. 1996)

Of all the stars in *Space Jam*, Lola Bunny and the Monstars might get the most attention. Lola Bunny is the newest Looney Tune. "We ran into a lot of trouble creating a look for Lola," remembered animation co-director Tony Cervone. "Every time we would draw a female rabbit it just looked like Bugs in drag - there was

some dangerous ground to be tread. I think we did some things to her color-wise that wouldn't have been done in the old days."

In developing the Monstars, the antagonists who are ordered by Swackhammer to tear the Looney Tunes to pieces, animation co-director Bruce Smith noted, "The Monstars don't follow the same basic construction formulas that are followed by the Looney Tunes. They're much more anatomical and threatening, kind of more on the realistic side and more modern than the Looney Tunes."

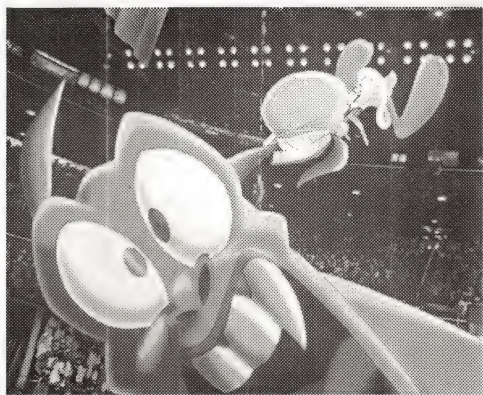
Space Jam gives Jordan a chance to get animated - in a way. In the scene where Jordan is playing golf, the story calls for him to get sucked down a hole. The visual effects team built a 3D version of Jordan by scanning his image and creating a digital version of Jordan in the computer. This enabled Cinesite to manipulate the footage of Jordan to their satisfaction.

Space Jam digital effects producer Helen Elswit has worked on films like *Outbreak* and *The River Wild*. In her past films, Elswit's expertise was needed for a limited number of shots. On *Outbreak*, there were just 200 visual effect shots. *Space Jam* has over one thousand.

The scene she is most excited about occurs early in the film, after the audience sees Michael on the basketball court. In what looks like one unbroken camera movement, the audience moves through every possible movie treatment imaginable.

The camera pans upward from the basketball court and the live-action world is left behind. The camera moves through the rooftop and continues higher to a computer generated sky. The action flies through space until it arrives at the Nerdluks planet. Swiftly moving closer to the three dimensional world, the shot passes into a giant carved mouth which leads to an animated Swackhammer, presented in all his meanness.

"It was one of our most complicated shots, but what I like so much about that scene is that it takes us through several formats," said Elswit. "We start out with a live-action situation and as



Even Tweety is a basketball star in *Space Jam* (TM & © Warner Bros. 1996)

the camera cranes up, there's the illusion of going through a rooftop. Obviously, since you can't take a camera through a rooftop, a miniature model was created. The camera goes by the rooftop model and continues into outer space, which was three-dimensional computer generated. Then it goes from outer space to the planet and a two-dimensional environment. In one shot we've gone from live action to miniature model to a completely computer generated environment to a two-dimensional environment."

While the film is a full-length feature, which would require lengthy preparation, the time frame to make *Space Jam* was severely condensed. In order to have the film in theaters by November, the production team had to work around the clock, yet maintaining the high level of quality demanded by Ivan Reitman. Some of the major production crew didn't begin working on the film until January of 1996, leaving them less than a year to produce a completed film. "Coming in late, every part has been hard," said animation producer Ron Tuppe, who noted that his main concern was the look of the integration. "The obvious difficulty is marrying the composites together so everything works. We can't allow there to be any animation jittering, jumping or floating. With over a thousand composite shots of live-action, CGI and two-dimensional animation, each shot is a little special effect shot."

The new technologies used in the production created some problems. For example, Jordan and the other live-action actors were shot on an all green set. Actors wearing green outfits from head to toe would be on the set going through the motions of the cartoon characters, who would be added via animation later. During the shooting, one of the green actors would occasionally pass briefly in front of Jordan. What might have gone unnoticed on the set would be picked up later when viewed by the animation co-directors, Bruce Smith and Tony Cervone. Since anything green would be removed automatically, it meant that the part of Jordan behind the green actor would also disappear. When Smith and Cervone noticed a

bit of Jordan disappear, they knew that it was time to have a Looney Tune pass between Jordan and the camera, hiding the momentary loss of his body.

The film does have a special look to it. As animation co-producer Allison Abbate sees it, the film is a Looney Tunes reunion. "It's been fun working with these characters in such a scenario where they act alongside live-action actors. We've tried to capture that classic Looney Tunes feeling without making too much of an homage."

Animation co-directors Smith and Cervone have their own ways of describing the unique combination of the Looney Tunes, Michael Jordan, and the technical wizardry utilized in the production of the film.

"It's the *Independence Day* of animated films," beamed Tony Cervone. "I don't think any picture has combined so many different media as have been used in *Space Jam*, and all are interchangeable at different times. It's not constantly one medium with another. There's animation with the CG environment, there's animation in the traditional environment, live action in the CG environment, and live action within an animated environment."

"It's between 2D and 3D ... call it two-and-

a-half" explained Bruce Smith. "As a film, I'd call it a purely entertaining action comedy. For us, it was a tribute to what Bob Clampett and Chuck Jones brought to the Looney Tunes. We grew up with these characters, so for us it's an honor. It's like a mantle being handed to you - you have to be flattered."

Added Cervone: "That's true. With the Looney Tunes, we were working with some screen legends, and you have to be serious about that."

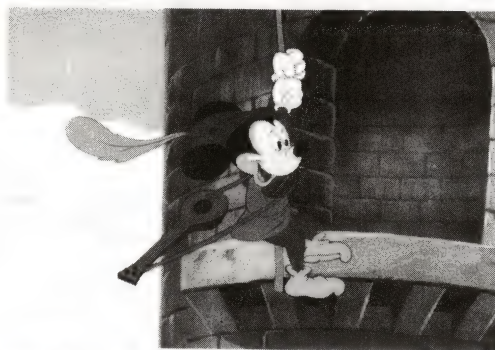
Warner Brothers masters Ben Hardaway, Tex Avery, Friz Freleng, Clampett and Jones transformed silly thoughts into non-stop hilarity with the help of a "wascawwy wabbit" named Bugs. A maladjusted mallard called Daffy. A pitifully inept hunter named Elmer. A plump pig with a speech-impediment named Porky. The hot-tempered gun-slinger Yosemite Sam. Taz, Marvin Martian, the Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote, Tweety and Sylvester, and so many more...

Space Jam has big shoes to fill if it hopes to recapture the magic the masters created.

Only time and the audience will tell if those shoes will fit.



Glenn Anton interviewed Joe Barbera in **ANIMATO! #34**.



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Felix Gets Another Life

The Twisted Tales of Felix the Cat is back for a Second Season on CBS and David Krell takes a look at the cartoon cat's illustrious history

by David Krell

Felix the Cat has come back for another season of the CBS Saturday morning program, *The Twisted Tales of Felix the Cat*. Although most baby boomers recognize the 1960's television version with its catchy theme song as their version of Felix, the cartoon cat has actually been around since the silent film era, debuting in 1919. Throughout the Jazz Age of the 1920's, Felix dominated the popular culture, heavily utilizing personalities and events of the day. From those early silent films to the present day, the various Felix incarnations have maintained common threads for seventy plus years, deserving of an examination.

In 1919, Pat Sullivan and his assistant, Otto Messmer, produced *Feline Follies* for Paramount Screen Magazine, an infotainment combination shown with the feature film. Truth be told, Messmer was the primary creative force behind *Felix the Cat*, however, Sullivan continually claimed credit as he owned the animation studio.

Feline Follies features Felix hallmarks, notably the various uses of Felix's anatomy. For example, the tail changes into a question mark, toothbrush and scooter baseboard. Other items transform, a common occurrence in Felix films. For example, musical notes from a banjo form the wheels for the scooter baseboard.

The main character in *Feline Follies* is actually a Felix prototype named Master Tom; the Felix moniker would not come into play until the third film. Master Tom differs somewhat from the mischievous yet innocent Felix familiar to audiences, possessing an edgier and manipulative quality which manifests as he attempts to seduce Miss Kitty White, a female feline. What goes around comes around as Master Tom learns of his friend's huge litter and subsequently attempts suicide by sucking on a gas pipe outside the gas company.

John Canemaker explores Felix' early history and Messmer's vital yet largely hidden contribution in *Felix: The Twisted Tale of the World's Most Famous Cat*. "But the shocking finale is also a barometer of the country's mood as America entered the twenties. Otto Messmer went to war and was one of two million young men exposed to death on a grand scale; that sobering experience is reflected in his unsentimental animation."

Throughout the 1920's silent films, Sullivan, Messmer et al employed signs of the times and established Felix hallmarks, helping



© Felix the Cat Productions

to form the character's personality and foundation which continues even into the present incarnation. Felix's resourcefulness in changing an object's utility is perhaps the most continuous and best known trait. Recalling Charles Lindbergh, *The Non-Stop Fright* depicts Felix trying to win a flight contest with a \$50,000 prize. Felix creates his plane, using dizzy symbols (propeller), sandwich boards (wings), the number "4" (chair) and a barrel (chassis).

Felix Saves the Day uses the baseball motif as the sport regained popularity after the 1919 Black Sox scandal, mostly thanks to Babe Ruth. Our hero climbs his own question marks to see the jailed Willie Brown, star of the Nifty Nine baseball team. In *Felix in Hollywood*, Felix changes his own shape into that of his actor roommate's bag, fooling him and gaining a trip to Tinseltown where he encounters several Hollywood celebrities of the day, for example, Charlie Chaplin. Felix parodies Chaplin in a later film, *The Cold Rush*.

With the advent of sound and color and Sullivan's 1933 death, the visibility of the simple, silent black and white Felix narrowed with Messmer's comic strip being the primary venue, indeed, a far cry from the mass exposure and subsequent popularity provided by the cinema. In 1935, animation producer Amedee Van Beuren came to Messmer with a comeback

proposal, culminating the next year with *The Goose that Laid the Golden Egg*, *Neptune Nonsense* and *Bold King Cole*.

Although ambitious in the use of Technicolor and music (Winston Sharples), Van Beuren and former Disney director Burt Gillett did not utilize Felix' familiar characteristics and he somehow gets lost in the shuffle. One wonders if a character replacement for Felix would have altered the films' impact or enjoyableness. Actually, any character could have taken Felix' place as the films are based on well-known legends with no real individuality for Felix to give a unique spin on the familiar stories.

Canemaker attributes the film troika's lackluster quality to director Gillett, and notes the diminished use of the transformation hallmark. "The director obviously felt it necessary to connect his constantly moving slick Mickey look-alike with the old staccato inkblot Felix of yore — if only to remind audiences who his character is supposed to be. There is a grudging feeling in the use of the old metamorphic bits, and they considerably diminish in use in the last two shorts. In *Neptune Nonsense*, for example, Felix's tail detaches from his rear to become an exclamation point, but the action is so poorly staged and brief it is difficult to see."

To be fair, the three strip Technicolor technology of the 1930's offered something special for animators, according to *A History of Narrative Film*, "a great deal more verisimilitude than its predecessor. (the red and green two-strip color process) " Sometimes, though, bigger is not necessarily better and bells and whistles do not make up for lack of story or character development.

Messmer kept Felix relatively silent during the next two decades compared with other cartoon figures, concentrating instead on the comic strip. In the late 1950's, former Fleischer Studio animator Joe Oriolo looked to restore the feline to its once worldwide popularity, a formidable task, to say the least. Canemaker describes the formative steps.

"Reviving Felix was not easy. Most of the film and TV corporations Oriolo and Sullivan [Pat Sullivan's nephew] approached considered the character old-hat, if not moribund. Trans-Lux became interested only after Oriolo put up his own money to finance a pilot for a TV series. On the strength of Oriolo's film, \$1,750,000 in sales was appropriated to produce 260 Felix episodes. The format could run as four-minute individual episodes or a continuing quarter hour, thus providing programming flexibility to stations."

From a programming standpoint, *Felix the Cat* holds an important place historically as the first first-run syndicated cartoon. First-run syndication occurs where a program supplier sells original programming to individual stations or station groups rather than a network. Why syndication rather than a network? Money. According to Don Oriolo, son of Joe Oriolo and current CEO of Felix the Cat Productions, Inc., the financial setup spurred the comeback.



© Felix the Cat Productions

"Trans-Lux [the syndicator] had a deal it couldn't refuse with a \$5,000 per episode cost vs. \$60,000 or \$70,000 per episode which was pretty much the industry standard." Animation buffs will recognize Trans-Lux as the syndicator of Joe Oriolo's other 1960's cartoon, *The Mighty Hercules*, the first television cartoon based on an action adventure hero.

The 1960's Felix continued the metamorphosis motif, albeit in a somewhat different manner. Rather than changing objects or parts of his anatomy regularly, Felix possessed a magic bag of tricks which itself could be transformed into the object needed, allowing

the instant recognizability of the 1960's show. People who grew up with the show, whether during the original run or reruns, know the theme song by heart.

Felix the Cat. The Wonderful, Wonderful Cat.

*You'll laugh so hard your sides will ache,
your heart will go pitter-pat...
watching Felix the Wonderful Cat.*

In addition, the title character had a supporting cast of somewhat stereotypical characters: Rock Bottom (a 'gruff bulldog' as described by Canemaker), Professor (homage to the 'mad professor' characters from science

fiction movies and Albert Einstein in behavior and looks respectively) and Poindexter (Professor's genius nephew named after Oriolo's attorney - E.W. Poindexter). All the characters were given their voice by the late Jack Mercer, who supplied Popeye's voice for almost 50 years.

Flash forward thirty-five years or so and another Felix the Cat revival is apparent. Save for a feature-length film in 1989, the character has stayed somewhat quiet. Like the saying goes, everything old is new again and in 1995, *The*

*Continued on
Page 67*



© Felix the Cat Productions

CAPTAIN SIMIAN: The Highly Evolved Space Adventure/Comedy

Or, Why You Shouldn't Judge Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys By Its Title

by Mark Lungo

Have you been waiting for someone to do a new comedy/adventure cartoon starring animal characters, in the tradition of series like *Duck Tales*? Maybe it would be interesting if the show was also a *Star Trek*-like space opera; when producers have combined the two genres in the past, the results have ranged from mediocre to disastrous, so it's time someone did it right. If I've just described the show of your dreams,

then take heart; by the time you read this article, *Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys* will be on the air.

If that title made you want to avoid the show like the plague, I urge you to reconsider. I've seen the first four episodes of *Captain Simian* (see review) and read plotlines for 16 of the 26 episodes; based on this, I can guarantee that *Captain Simian*, which details the adventures of a group of artificially evolved

monkeys who protect the universe from evil, is a good show. It is not a mindless slapstick comedy for little kids, a la Hanna-Barbera's post-*Star Wars* space farces (*Astro and the Space Mutts*, *Galaxy Goof-Ups*, *Yogi's Space Race*). It is not the disappointing *Bucky O'Hare and the Toad Wars*. And although *Simian* belongs to the same "animal heroes" genre, it is definitely not another *Turtles* clone.

Here's the premise: Captain Simian and his crew are a group of spacefaring heroes who used to be ordinary Earth monkeys. The " ", a nameless group of enigmatic, highly advanced aliens, use a device called the Cerebrotron to turn them into "intelligent creature(s) capable of logic, emotion and speech", then send them into battle against Nebula, an cosmically powerful villain who plans to destroy the existing universe and create a new one which he will rule.

Unlike the many animated series that are the result of strictly commercial motives (the producers want to sell merchandise or do an "FCC friendly" educational show), *Simian* was originated by a creator who was passionate about the material—who, in fact, had carried the basic idea with him since childhood. His name is Gordon Bressack, and he's written for some of the best animated series of recent years—but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

Bressack's colorful background is as unusual as anything that ever happened to a character in his scripts. "I was an actor in New York for about ten years, and I was with a lot of acting companies. I toured Europe and various countries several times. I was with the La Mama experimental theater club in New York, which is very well known. Then I started doing my own New Wave revues. One was called *Voidville* and another was *Vandals of 1981*; [they were] sort of like guerrilla theater variety shows. We didn't have an impressionist, we had a depressionist, who basically just said really depressing things. I started to get some attention for that, and people asked me to do some television stuff, so I started to get more involved in writing and less involved in performing. For a while I had a cable TV show in New York and then I had a radio show. Meanwhile, I wrote two screenplays that I came west to attempt to sell."

Bressack recalls that one of the unproduced scripts "was this really wacky, stupid idea about a kid who goes back in time to when his parents are in high school—it's called *The Throwback*. Though people liked it and enjoyed it, the general feeling was that it was too fantastic and



The Captain himself. (© Hallmark Entertainment/Monkeyshine Production Inc.)



Dr. Splitz is voiced by Maurice LaMarche. (© Hallmark Entertainment/Monkeyshine Production Inc.)

Twilight Zone-ish.” Of course, the similar *Back to the Future* was a hit a few years later, but Bressack says “I don’t believe anybody stole the idea from me; I think good ideas just float out there and whoever grabs them first and can do something with them, that’s what happens.”

Bressack got into cartoon writing when his wife, Ellen Gerstell, became a professional voice actress who worked frequently on animated TV series. “I thought, ‘Somebody has to write these things’, and so I submitted some story ideas to Gerard Baldwin, who was the producer of *The Smurfs* at Hanna-Barbera. Lo and behold, he bought one. That eventually led to a staff position at Hanna-Barbera”, where Bressack’s other credits included *Challenge of the GoBots*, *Pound Puppies* and *The Snorks*. Bressack then became story editor on the MCA/TMS adventure series *Bionic Six*, which aired in 1987. During the late 1980’s and early 1990’s, Bressack worked on prestigious, high profile series from Warner Bros. (he was a staff writer on *Tiny Toon Adventures*, *Animaniacs*—for which he won an Emmy— and *Pinky and the Brain*), Disney (*Duck Tales*, *Darkwing Duck*, *Gummi Bears*) and other producers (*Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *The Real Ghostbusters*).

Bressack and his frequent writing partner Charles Howell IV also spent a year under contract to Fox, where they were supposed to write for a sitcom adaptation of the Tom Hanks film *Big* that was never produced. “We were being paid for an entire year not to write,” Bressack says. “One day I hope not to direct. One week, our check didn’t come, so I called them up and I threatened to write something, so they immediately sent the check.” Still, the experience turned out to be a good one for Bressack, because it gave him “some time to think about what I really want to do in this business. I realized I’d had a lot of ideas that I’d pitched that had been close to happening, and I

started to work on an idea that I’d had for years, which ultimately became the idea for *Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys*.”

Many animated series are quickly thrown together and/or based on ephemeral pop culture fads: toy lines, video games, real life teen idols. Not so with *Captain Simian*; Bressack has had the basic idea for the show “since I was a kid and they were sending monkeys into space. I’ve always been crazy about monkeys.” Bressack (who originally conceived *Simian* as a live action series, a la *Lancelot Link, Secret Chimp*) had been trying to sell his dream project to several companies (including Disney) for years, “but there were generally reasons not to do it. The reaction

at Disney was people thought they liked it, but that it really wasn’t Disney. If I had made it *Space Ducks* or *Space Dogs* or something, maybe it would have gotten a different reaction. But I felt strongly about monkeys, because I feel it’s a stronger point of identification.”

Bressack’s luck changed when Film Roman hired him to story edit the second season of *Mighty Max*. During his tenure on the show, Bressack met Rob Hudnut, *Max*’s co-executive producer and a former executive at Mattel Toys, and producer/director/artist Gary Hartle, whose other credits include *Animaniacs* and the animated series based on *The Mask*. Bressack got along well with Hudnut and Hartle, so he decided to show them his *Captain Simian* concept; he began by approaching Hartle to do character designs. “I said to Gary, ‘Look, I don’t have thousands of dollars to pay you to make some presentation art, but I’ll tell you what—if you draw it, I’ll just cut you in. We’ll be partners.’ “

Pleased with Hartle’s artwork (“The drawings were great”), Bressack took his *Simian* material to Hudnut next. “Rob also liked it and saw the potential both for toys and television.” Hudnut was about to leave for England to meet with Bluebird Toys, the firm that originated both *Mighty Max* and its predecessor, *Polly Pocket*, then licensed them to Mattel for the American market. “[Hudnut] brought the artwork that Gary had done [with him]”, Bressack continues. “At a meeting, he took it out, and within half an hour we had a deal.”



The evil Nebula. (© Hallmark Entertainment/Monkeyshine Production Inc.)

CAPTAIN SIMIAN IN REVIEW: A PROMISING START

by Mark Lungo

So you've read my *Captain Simian and the Space Monkeys* article, but you're still wary, and I can't blame you. We've all been disappointed by TV shows and movies that couldn't live up to their own hype. When I agreed to do this article, I knew that the creators of *Space Monkeys* had admirable track records, but I couldn't be sure if the series would be as good as they claimed. Then I saw the show; now I'm a believer. (Get it? Monkeys? "I'm a Believer"? Sorry.) The first four episodes of *Simian* have convinced me that the series is going to be a lot of fun.

Bressack made some wise decisions when he wrote *Simian's* pilot script, *Yes, We Have No Bananas/Yes, We Still Have No Bananas*. He made the episode a two-parter, allowing himself enough time to establish the Space Monkeys' backstory and introduce all the major characters without sacrificing action or humor. Bressack shrewdly hooks his audience immediately with the old *in medias res* technique; *Bananas* begins in the middle of an epic space battle between Captain Simian and Rhesus One, then reveals the Space Monkeys' origins through a series of extended flashbacks.

Speaking of the Space Monkeys' origins,

Bressack becomes unexpectedly moralistic when he shows that all the team members except Shao Lin were mistreated on Earth. The abusers pay for their cruelty when Orbitron intervenes: Spydor's owner, an ill-tempered organ grinder who threatens him with "another beating" if he misbehaves, loses his meal ticket: a brat who makes fun of Splitzy becomes trapped in Splitzy's zoo cage; and two hunters who try to kill Gor end up being menaced by a group of jungle cats.

Bananas has a lot more to recommend it. The heroes are all likable and engaging, with much potential for further development. The animation is very good, especially considering *Captain Simian's* moderate budget. The dialogue is as witty as you'd expect from Bressack, a veteran of the sophisticated Warner and Disney series. And despite all the exposition necessary in this pilot episode, Bressack keeps events moving at a brisk pace.

The next two episodes maintain the pilot's standards. Pamela Hickey & Dennys McCoy's *Ape-lien* is an amusing yet suspenseful parody of *Alien*; a scene where the Space Monkeys battle the title creature in the Primate Avenger's elevator shaft has the series' best animation so far. *The Monkey Has Landed* (by Bressack and Mark Seidenberg) seems to be satirizing *Star Trek's*

This Side of Paradise. Our heroes happen upon a lush jungle world whose sole resident is Lilith (Andrea Thompson), an evolved simian like the Space Monkeys themselves. Lilith claims the planet is Earth, and most of the crew want to believe her, but Shao Lin (who is dismayed by Captain Simian's attraction to Lilith) is suspicious—and rightly so. A fun episode with good characterization, highlighted by the stunt casting of Thompson (Jerry Doyle's wife and former *Babylon 5* co-star) and the inventive use of Dale Schacker's score (whenever Shao Lin interrupts a scene between Captain Simian and Lilith, the romantic music literally grinds to a halt).

As much as I liked *Captain Simian*, I have two concerns for its future. I've already discussed my reservations about the series' title. Also, the two recurring dialogue shticks, Captain Simian's monkey-themed catchphrases ("Flip out!", "Peel off!", etc.) and Rhesus Two's constant brain jokes and references, could get old really fast; Bressack and the other writers will have to guard against overusing them. But these are only minor quibbles. Overall, *Captain Simian* takes a concept that could have been dreadful in the wrong hands and makes it very entertaining, thanks to a committed creative

While Bluebird and Mattel agreed to make *Space Monkeys* toys (the first action figures with gripping hands and feet!), Bressack, Hudnut and Hartle continued to develop the concept of the TV show. Bressack says, "Whenever there was a problem, we subjected everything to what became known as the dreaded 'Monkey Litmus Test', which meant, 'Stop and think: How would a monkey do it?'. That solved a lot of problems and gave us a lot of unique aspects to the show that really make it stand out from other action shows."

The litmus test led to Simian's crew using interesting "monkey tech" devices. Consider the Primate Avenger, the starship provided to our heroes by the "... The Space Monkeys converted the craft's bridge into a spacegoing jungle complete with monkey bars, as well as five battle stations with both hand and foot-operated controls. When necessary, the stations detach from the main hull to become separate fighting ships. Simian and his comrades also use a rope-like substance called "Insta-Vine" (the writers' guide calls it "silly string with a purpose") to swing through alien landscapes and tie up villains. The Space Monkeys also

have "Pitcoms," communicators installed in the armpits of their suits, the use of which admittedly looks kind of silly...which brings us to our next topic.

Bressack and his partners also had to decide whether *Simian* would be a comedy series, an action/adventure series, or both. Fortunately, Bressack has written for both genres. He notes that "I'm basically known as a comedy writer," although "my background is a pretty good mixture of both [comedy and action]. I won an Emmy for *Animaniacs*. I didn't win an Emmy for any of the action I'd written—not that I think it was bad." Bressack's task was to define the very nature of the show. "When developing the show, you go back and forth; you have to make decisions. 'Is this too funny? Is this not funny enough? Are we going to do an *Earthworm Jim* kind of wacky universe show?' We decided 'No, we're not.' We're going to do a serious, *Star Trek/Babylon 5* universe, but our characters are what will make it unique, and the fact that we can do certain things that [the live action shows] can't do because we have animation working for us."

If you ask me, it's a good thing Bressack

feels the way he does. In a year when major animation producers have suddenly regained interest in the "animal crime fighter" genre—Disney's *Mighty Ducks*, Warner Bros.' *Road Rovers* and Saban's *Samurai Pizza Cats* also debuted this season—*Captain Simian's* deft juggling of humor and serious sci-fi plotlines makes it stand out from its competitors, all of which use the "wacky universe" template to one extent or another. As Bressack says of *Simian*, "The stories are strong, the characterizations are strong, the themes are important and strong, but the comedy is quite evident, and [there's] big doses of it." Watch *Simian* and see for yourself; chances are you won't be disappointed. 

Mark Lungo, a Cleveland-based freelance writer, makes his fourth appearance in ANIMATO! with the *Captain Simian* articles. He'd like to thank everyone who helped him make these pieces possible: Jeff (Glen) Bennett, Gordon Bressack, Sylvie Brown, Joe Pearson, and especially the long-suffering Jerry Doyle.

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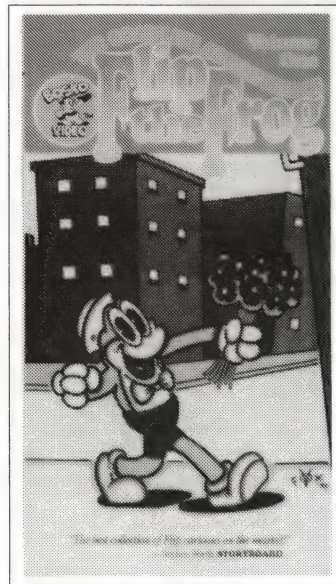
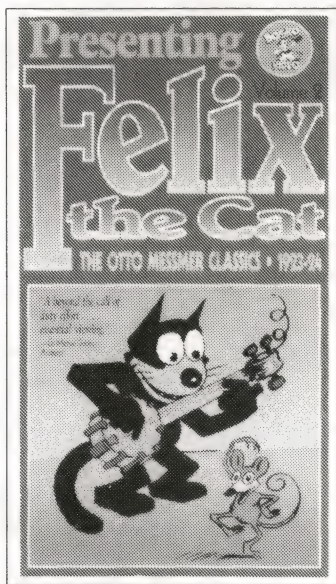


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YOUNG READERS' PAGE!

Quite a response from our Young Gag Writers! Even some young adults couldn't resist the chance to submit funny lines. Here's two pages of the ones that made us laugh. We still have a pile of submissions that we expect to use in future issues. Keep 'em coming.

As always, we love to open mail from our younger readers. Stay tooned.

I hope this one doesn't have airbags!

Hey! Where's the cream filling?



Alain Dion

Age 28

Laval, Quebec, Canada



Austin Savoie

Age 9

Wilbraham, MA

Note: Each reader whose gag or drawing appears in this magazine will receive a grab bag of ANiMATO! goodies.

Okay, I lied on-line. I don't look like Mickey Mouse. Is the date off?



Honey, next time, stop and ask for directions.
Okay?

Desiree Urbanski
Age 21
Orland Park, IL

Hee Hee
If they
only knew.

Yah. Our
people drive
Volvos!
Ha Ha Ha!



Mom always said
I needed more iron
in my diet.



I love these things!
Crunchy on the outside
with a chewy center.

Miry Sorkin
Age 16
Edison, NJ



THE MOUSE AND THE REAPER

*Andrew Osmond warns us the following article is in bad taste....
Strong-hearted types only should read on!*



Did Gaston deserve to die? Read on and decide for yourself! (© The Walt Disney Company. All rights reserved.)

by Andrew Osmond

In Stephen King's *Pet Semetary*, there's a wonderful scene where the hero dreams he works the deathwatch at Disneyworld. As King points out, the reaper stalks the Magic Kingdom as much as any other institution, so why not celebrate it? *Some grinning man in Main Street would clutch his chest as the heart attack struck, a teenage girl would suddenly collapse in a flopping epileptic fit, a pregnant woman...*

Er, thanks Stephen. But that's real-life, isn't it? Surely no-one ever dies in a Disney toon? Except Bambi's mum, that is, and Willie the Singing Whale, and a few witches, and... In actual fact, for a series that prides itself on wholesomeness, Disney toons have a shockingly high body count. But and this is the crucial point, they keep killing the wrong people. How many readers groaned when the Captain saved Quasi in *Hunchback of Notre Dame*? Who hoped Baloo wasn't faking in *The Jungle Book*? Which fool gave *The Little Mermaid* a happy ending?

In its dedication to give you the toon facts, **ANIMATO!** is proud to present the first ever:

DISNEY DEATH CHART

FILM: *Snow White* (1937)

WHO DIES: The Queen/Witch.

HOW: Following what is to be a modus operandi for Disney villains, the poor dear loses her footing in a storm and tumbles off a precipice. A boulder, imported from the Road Runner cartoons, falls after her but we never hear the splat.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: Dopey, No one that obnoxious should live.

FILM: *Bambi* (1943)

WHO DIES: Bambi's mum.

HOW: In a scene which traumatised countless generations, Bambi and his mum are enjoying a graze when unseen danger arrives. The deer flee: a shot rings out: then only silence...and the

smell of roasting venison.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: The sadist who dreamed up this scene.

FILM: *Make Mine Music* (1946)

WHO DIES: Willie, the Whale Who Wanted to Sing at the Met.

HOW: Willie, a born ham, serenades sailor Tetti Tatti, hoping the seadog will recognise his vocal talent. Tatti is unimpressed and goes for the harpoon.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: Whoever thought this was an adequate follow-up to *Fantasia*.

FILM: *Cinderella* (1950)

WHO DIES: Lucifer (Lady Tremaine's

housecat)

HOW: After spending the entire film torturing Cinderella's mice, Lucifer gets his comeuppance during the climatic chase up a tower. Accidentally knocked out of a window, the yowling Lucifer is last seen heading groundward at an accelerating rate.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: Cindy's fairy godmother, the smuggest deus ex machina in history.

FILM: *Alice in Wonderland* (1951)

WHO DIES: The oysters, several royal servants.

HOW: The innocent oysters are slurped up by the heartless Walrus and Carpenter: the servants are beheaded on Queen's orders (both offscreen).

Hey it's literature.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED:

Whoever thought he was a better character-designer than Sir John Tenniel.

FILM: *Peter Pan* (1953)

WHO DIES: A nameless pirate (best kind!)

HOW: The merry salt is halfway through a performance of "A Pirate's Life is Short" when the irritable Hook grabs a pistol and makes the prophecy self-fulfilling.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED:

Hook, to stop Spielberg dreaming up silly sequels.

FILM: *Lady and the Tramp* (1955)

WHO DIES: Nutsy, a homeless dog.

HOW: While imprisoned in the pound, Lady and her friends witness Nutsy taking "the last walk" into doggie oblivion. You almost expect James Cagney to break in on the soundtrack.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: Tramp's pup Scamp, thus preventing an endless series of mediocre comic-strips.

FILM: *Sleeping Beauty* (1959)

WHO DIES: Maleficent, in dragon form.

HOW: This is unfair, Maleficent is doing great until a fairy (Flora, I think) appears and delivers the worst rhyming couplet in toon history. Maleficent, presumably a poetry lover, expires from shock.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: Flora, for cheating.

FILM: *The Fox and the Hound* (1981)



According to Osmond, Dopey should have been given the poison apple! (© The Walt Disney Company. All rights reserved.)

WHO DIES: Tod's mum.

HOW: In the same way as Bambi's mum (what is it about mothers and Unseen Huntsmen?). But her appearance is so brief that there's no emotional punch at all.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: Widow Tweed, for scaring Tim Burton and John Lasseter from Disney when it needed them most.

FILM: *The Black Cauldron* (1985)

WHO DIES: The Horned King

HOW: Sucked into his own cauldron in a dramatic burst of light. There's probably some Freudian irony here, but most viewers had given up by this stage.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: Whoever thought a five-book saga could be turned into an eighty-minute film.

FILM: *The Great Mouse Detective* (1986) and beyond.

WHO DIES: Rattigan, Sykes (and his dogs), Ursula (and her eels, *The Little Mermaid*), McLeach (*Rescuers Down Under*), Gaston, Mustafa, Scar, Frolo.

HOW: Now this is laziness. It's all very well contriving higher and higher things for characters to fall from - Big Ben, suspension bridges, waterfalls, ravines, Notre Dame - but it exemplifies the "no consequences" attitude of modern Hollywood. (After all, when will we meet the suckers who have to clean up the mess?)

The sidekicks, meanwhile, get an even worse deal. Sikes' dogs and Ursula's eels end up as brown'n'crunchies, giving kids two salutary health messages: don't drive cars into the New York subway system, and never get in front of a sea-god's trident.

The only death that's at all scary is Scar's and that's precisely because - as with *Pinocchio*'s donkey transformation - you don't actually see it.

WHO SHOULD HAVE DIED: Ariel, Quasi, Esmerelda (because they're meant to), Wilbur (who did absolutely nothing in *Rescuers Down Under* but look stupid), and Simba (for copyright theft).

I rest my case. TTFN, I'm off to watch *Fist of the North Star*....



Andrew Osmond is the ANIMATO! correspondent for Great Britain and a wiseguy.

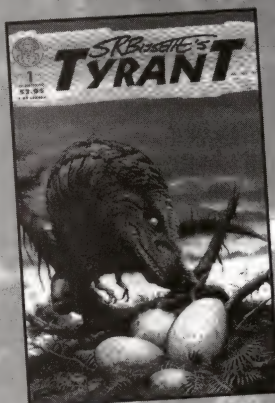


Watch out Ariel...if they had followed the original story, you would have never made it to tv! (© The Walt Disney Company. All rights reserved.)

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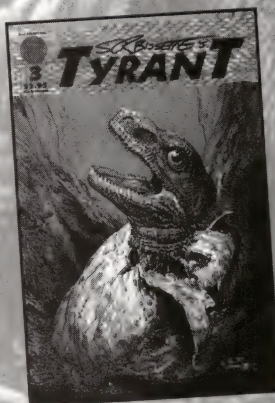


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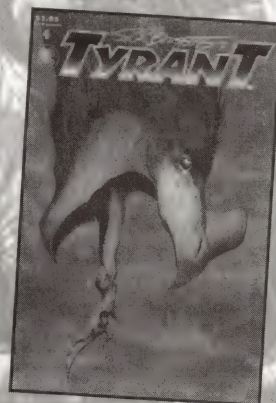


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—Chris Staros, *The Staros Report*



TALES WITH TEETH



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Felix - From Page 57

Twisted Tales of Felix the Cat became part of CBS' Saturday morning lineup. Don Oriolo explains the philosophy behind introducing Felix to a 90's generation. "Felix's attraction is based on the combination of the old and new—nostalgia for the previous TV incarnation and the visual appeal of new graphics and design. We're continuing a legacy, not creating a legacy."

Like its television predecessor, *The Twisted Tales of Felix the Cat* features the famous magic bag of tricks, continuing and reinforcing that particular Felix hallmark. The shows opening depicts Felix flying in his magic bag of tricks through a maze of colors and characters. In a bow to his father's show, Don Oriolo will introduce Professor et al in recurring roles this season. However, *Twisted Tales* represents a decidedly different version of the famous feline.

Whereas the 1960's Felix found himself in light-hearted misadventures and scrapes, today's Felix exhibits a somewhat edgier quality, reminiscent of the silent films with more movement, activity and confrontational settings. Felix' dialogue frequently exhibits sarcasm and

cynicism, aligning him more with the audience, similar to the approach in *Mystery Science Theater 3000*.

While children comprise a substantial portion of the Saturday morning audience, *The Twisted Tales of Felix the Cat* has some appeal for adults as well. For example, the episode entitled *Middle Aged Felix* depicts Felix and his friends imitating a beatnik poetry reading complete with a goateed Felix playing an improvised bongo set. This is but one example of several in dialogue, story or setting that will appeal to adults who grew up with the earlier TV version.

In today's market, introducing a new character into the popular culture has difficulties attached, e.g., building name recognition. Arguably, reintroducing and regenerating a property will be more difficult. Although the name recognition exists, so does a built-in bias. Don Oriolo believed the obstacles were not insurmountable. "We sold the show with constant perseverance and Film Roman delivering the Felix animation with different twists. The tell-tale signs were there to prove

that a young market existed for Felix the Cat. For example, corporate sponsorship saw the licensing and merchandising possibilities."

Few creations find worldwide success and adoration, especially in animation. Fewer still last seventy plus years. Returning a character to its roots while adding new dimensions may be tricky, but the process works. Witness, for example, Warner Brothers' efforts with Batman and his darker aspects in the recent films similar to the original concept created by Bob Kane in 1939. Felix the Cat will also benefit from such a process.

Maintaining the character's integrity is paramount. *Felix the Cat*'s creative forces not only know this rule, but count on it. As Don Oriolo succinctly explains, "You survive because you want to survive. Stay true to the character and your vision and see where it takes you. *Felix the Cat* brings us along and vice versa."



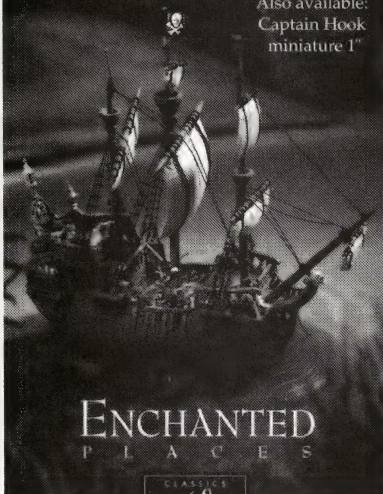
Freelance writer Davis Krell is based in New York.

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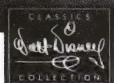
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Sheehan Passes – From Page 9

pleased with it. I wanted people to be aware of the great work that he and other Fleischer animators had done. Despite the efforts writers like Leonard Maltin, Leslie Cabarga and Mike Dobbs, if people knew anything about animation, it was all about the work of Walt Disney or later, the gang at Warner Brothers' "Termite Terrace." With my friend, producer Bill Naras, we presented a theatrical tribute - with ASIFA/Central - on *Hoppity Goes To Town* (originally known as *Mr. Bug Goes To Town*) and then in 1993, Bill Naras and I produced *Popeye's 60 Years on Film* at the Gateway Theater in Chicago. Both times, it was like pulling teeth to get Gordon up on the stage to talk to the audience. He truly was a shy person, and was truly amazed that so many people had still loved the films he had worked on, so many years before.

Gordon was not one to "blow his own horn," as Shamus Culhane had learned to do, or get people to convince him that his work had merit, as people had done for cartoon directors like Chuck Jones and Myron Waldman. Gordon Sheehan, unlike the late Warner Bros. animator Virgil Ross, Sheehan was not "suddenly" discovered by his animation art world to turn out "limited edition" animation "cels" to a public made up of more art investors than real fans. Gordon was proud of his earlier work, but he seemed truly amazed that so many knew of his work and wanted to honor him for it. Ironically, during the last few years of his life, Gordon talked about trying to market his own "limited edition" animation cels, but it was not to be.

I told Gordon once that I had always had trouble drawing women's faces, and he told me he had learned some fairly simple techniques from Grim Natwick when working with him on the character of *Princess Glory* on *Gulliver's Travels*. He offered to one day sit down and show me some of the things to practice. We never got around to do that. A few years ago, I had discovered that there was an international "Official Popeye Fanclub" in existence, and told Gordon that I would check into it. I did, and got to meet and become friends with co-founder

Mike Brooks and his wife Debbie, and fellow co-founder Fred Grandinetti. I began to go to the yearly "Popeye Picnic" convention held the weekend after Labor Day in Chester, Illinois. It was a great time, and seeing the Popeye statue overlooking the Mississippi river, seeing the wild parade and meeting the townspeople who lived in Chester, Ill., where *Popeye's* creator, Elzie Segar was born, was terrific. In 1993, Mike Brooks told me that he wanted to start paying tribute to the people who had done so much to popularize the *Popeye* characters, and he wanted to honor Gordon Sheehan with the first "lifetime achievement award" a plaque honoring his work as an artist and animator on the *Popeye* cartoons from 1933 through 1944 at Fleischer and then Famous Studios. Sadly, Gordon did not feel well enough to attend, but asked me to read his acceptance speech for him and accept the award. I did, and several times saw the award hanging proudly in his hallway. Since then, I tried to get Gordon and his wife Edith to visit Chester, and for one reason or another, they were not able to go. Earlier this year, I got a postcard from Gordon, telling me that he and Edith felt well enough to take a river boat trip down the Mississippi River. Sometimes, the river boat would dock - for a short time - at a town like Chester, Illinois. I was hoping that the Sheehans would finally get to visit the "hometown" of Popeye. Not long after I got Gordon's postcard, Mike Brooks called me up to tell me that a gentleman by the name of Ed Crowe had mentioned that an older gentleman came up to him and almost shyly mentioned that he had animated *Popeye* cartoons at the Fleischer Studios. This was after the short bus tour of Chester was over, and the passengers were about ready to go back on the boat. Mike had said that the description of the older man and his wife, might fit Gordon and Edith Sheehan. Sure enough, it was them. Typical of Gordon, he didn't want any fuss made over him, and so, didn't get to visit with Debbie and Mike Brooks again, or meet the other owners, Dave and Laurie Randall of the Popeye memorabilia

museum and store he would have loved to have seen. Although I was disappointed that he hadn't had a real good look at the town, I was happy that Gordon and his wife had at least been there.

One of the last times I had talked to Gordon, he had been complaining that his wrists were sore, and that he wanted to know if I knew anything about "carpel tunnel syndrome," and any hand exercises to relieve the pains. I told him that I had something on it somewhere, and that I'd call him when I found it. I also had told him about an auction to raise money for a proposed permanent Popeye museum, and asked if he would draw a Popeye sketch for the auction, and also something for the museum itself. Gordon said that he would if he felt better, and that I should call him back. Gordon's health had started to deteriorate a couple of years back, he had a knee operation, and a few other ailments, but he had always bounced back. So, no "alarm bells" were going off in my mind. Late in July, I called, and Edith told me that Gordon had a bad heart attack on the Fourth of July. He was, she said, resting in bed, didn't feel well enough to have visitors, but told me to call back in a week or so. I did, but there was no change. I left work on Thursday afternoon in the first week of September to head out to Chester, Illinois for the Popeye convention. Ever since going there, I made a point of visiting with Gordon when I got home to bring over some kind of Popeye nickname. Once, by accident, at a "flea market" there, I found some old sheet music from *Mr. Bug Goes To Town* that he was totally delighted with. When I got home, I was all set to give him a report of the trip. I wasn't prepared for the message on my answering machine from Edith Sheehan, telling me that Gordon had passed away on Friday. Gordon Sheehan was my mentor, my teacher, and my friend. He will be missed, but as long as people enjoy vintage Max Fleischer cartoons, his work will not be forgotten. 

Film historian and writer Lenny Kohl is based in Chicago.

New Nick – From Page 24

envelope with gross-out humor. *The Ren and Stimpy Show*, *Ahhh! Real Monsters* and *Rocko's Modern Life* haven't shied away from wet, stinky jokes. McRobb notes that the production "had no mandate to include it [gross-out humor] or not to include it."

However, it's clear from the pilot that *KABLAM!* is the type of show that will present a more sophisticated entertainment. Through focus groups, the production team has learned

about their audience, including the fact that kids are aspirational. McRobb said that ten year-olds want to be 12 year-olds, but not the other way around. Therefore there's not been any effort to dumb down the content of *KABLAM!*

Ultimately, Mittenthal said, the production team wants to have a show with "funny pictures that move funny." For a cutting edge "live action cartoon show" that's an admirable old-fashioned aspiration. 

Bennett – From Page 16

go golfing together sometimes. I've been golfing with Rob [Paulsen], and Frank [Welker] is a big golfer." Bennett reveals that there's one other reason why voice actors don't spend more time together after work, and it's a happy reason: "We just have so much fun doing what we do there [at work], that everything else is a little anticlimactic." 

TOON REVIEWS – From Page 7

from publishers, but whether you're discussing a book, video, laser or CD, coughing up the bucks yourself has a strong influence on your perception and satisfaction.

Readers familiar with McFarland books know they're mainly published for academic institutions. Generally reference volumes emphasizing the 3 R's, research, reference and reading with no frivolous dust jackets - just the facts, ma'am.

No day-glow ink or hologram cover to lure unsuspecting readers. Hal Erickson's book transcends the "library book" perception. Low on flash, heavy on research and substance while still being a good read, *Television Cartoon Shows* is sprinkled with black and white graphics. (Sound familiar?)

While this book is a serious compilation, the writing isn't the dead serious, heavy, somber tone you'd expect from a scholar. (You know the type I'm talking about. Those wacky professors who write about Daffy Duck like he was a tortured Tolstoy!)

Don't let the word "encyclopedia" fool you. Hal Erickson isn't afraid to make a point or call a spade a spade in the entries. You don't have to "read between the lines" or "infer" anything - it's right there in black and white! From *Crusader Rabbit* to *Ren & Stimpy*, Hal calls 'em like he sees 'em. In fact, the entries read very much like ANiMATO! articles rather than the expected encyclopedia factoids.

After all the exhausting work in the main body of this book, Hal Erickson took a breath to cover a slew of voice actors in a nine page overview. Acknowledging the fact that voice actors are often overlooked in the animation pantheon. Erickson makes an excellent point on television depending on quality voice work from the earliest days. Also worth mentioning is the voice actor anecdotes like this Welker gem: *After a hectic recording session featuring Frank Welker with a group of child actors on their first job, one of the kids went up to Welker and asked, "Do you have to go back to work after this?"*

Hal Erickson's volume is the best reference on television cartoons available - bar none. I'd be very happy on the proverbial desert island with only two animation books - *Television Cartoon Shows* and Len Maltin's *Of Mice and Magic*.

The McFarland Company keeps their books in supply and listed in a convenient catalog if you can't find it locally. I ordered mine through the Movie/Entertainment Book Club. You can also try the Whole Toon Catalog, though every book I ordered through Facets is on back order. Also check out your local library for a copy.

Erickson's comfortable writing style and attention to detail make this book Number One on the serious animation fan's must read, must have list. **Patrick Duquette**

Nine Lives to Live:

A Classic Felix Celebration by Otto Messmer

edited by David Gerstein

Fantagraphics Books

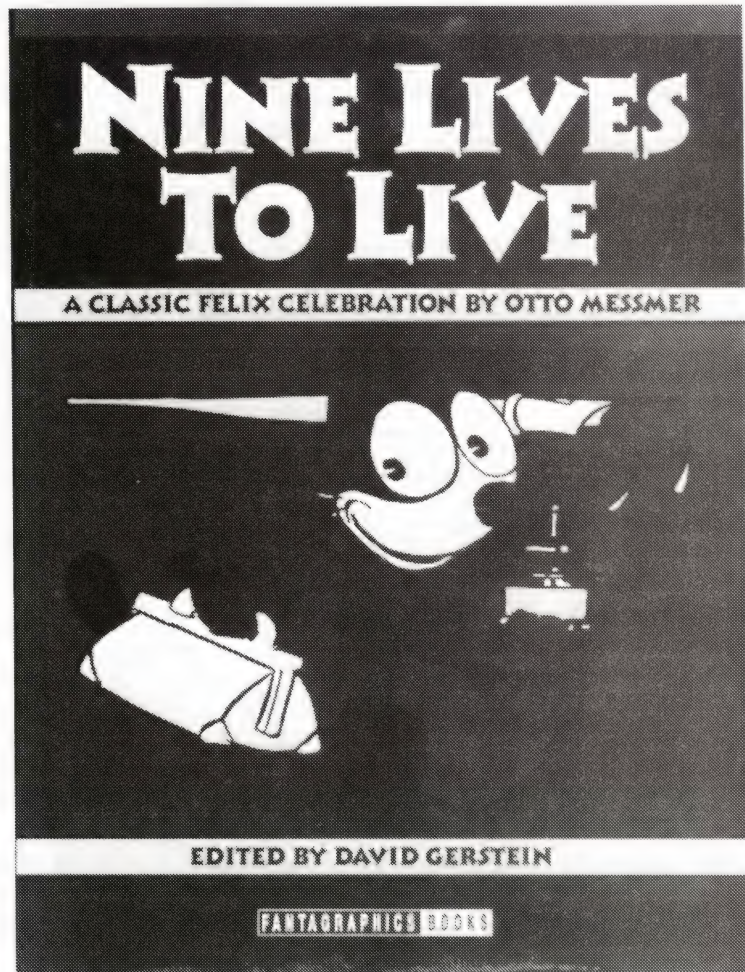
A must-have book for animation fans,

too common a practice in the animation industry, Messmer, thankfully, rightfully took credit in the 1960s. Gerstein's detailed introduction gives readers the backstage information they need to fully appreciate the comic strips that follow. **GMD**

THE ANIME MOVIE GUIDE: Japanese Animation Since 1983

by Helen McCarthy

Titan Books



Nine Lives to Live reprints some of the best Felix the Cat comic strips from the 1920s and 1930s and allows readers to discover the great talent of the late Otto Messmer. Beautifully presented in both black and white and color, the strips show examples of the "classic" Felix. If all you know about the character includes the magic bag and the professor, do yourself a favor and get this outstanding book.

Messmer was an artist and animator who created Felix for failed cartoonist, but successful promoter, Pat Sullivan, who promptly took credit for it. Although this was, unfortunately,

Readers take note: this is a different publication from *The Complete Anime Guide*, published by Tiger Mountain Press in 1995. *The Anime Movie Guide* is the work of Brit anime guru Helen McCarthy, ex-editor of the now-defunct *Anime FX* 'zine and one of the most vocal authorities in her field. Like Tiger's video directory, this oversized black-and-white paperback has limitations - most clear from the start - but it's crammed with enough data and opinions to keep *otaku*s happy for hours.

As the title suggests, McCarthy's book confines itself to post-1983, covering a wide

selection of OAVs as well as movies. Understandably, the focus is on fan favourites and titles released in the West, but McCarthy also covers less familiar material, ranging from the kids' series *Magical Girls Club Foursome* to the gay-themed *Wind and Trees Song*. The book traces the industry to '95, with *Ghost in the Shell* and Studio Ghibli's *Whisper of the Heart* among the last entries. There's no TV section, and fans wanting chronologies of *Robotech* or *Star Blazers* should certainly look elsewhere. In part, this reflects the book's Brit origins: despite TV imports like *Marine Boy*, the island had no real anime exposure until *Akira*.

That said, the guide covers spinoffs from older TV franchises, including the *Gundam* and *Macross* OAVs and the '80s versions of *8th Man* and *Devil Man*. Each entry starts with the US or UK title, followed by the Japanese name and variants the film has gone under. If you can't find the film you're looking for, fear not, an extremely user-friendly index directs you to the right heading. After the titles McCarthy does her best to clarify the tangled production credits: not easy in Western animation, let alone when you're considering the anime industry. Speaking as someone who's suffered his fair share of misinformation (for years I thought *Nausicaa* was directed by chara designer Kazuo Komatsubara), this kind of effort is appreciated.

Unlike McCarthy's *Introduction to Japanese Animation* (a slimmer overview of the field), the *Guide* lists all relevant Western cinema and video releases - and a confusing bunch they are! This is the place to look if you want to know if *Dagger of Kamui*, *Blade of Kamui* and *Revenge of the Ninja Warrior* are the same movie (they are): ditto if you want to find out the anime origins of *World of the Talisman* or *Robotech the Movie*. There's also info on what inspired a particular anime - novels, mangas, etc. - and an attempt to categorise titles by genre and content (including "Universal" and "Adult Only" ratings).

But what of the entries themselves? This is where the *Guide* will divide fans, as McCarthy's entries are shamelessly subjective, including an old-fashioned star system that'll annoy many. To be fair, McCarthy makes her biases clear at the outset, with lists of her favourite and least favourite titles. Her preferences are toward fantasy, especially Miyazaki, while her pantheon also includes *Night on the Galactic Railroad*, *The Wings of Honeamise Dirty Pair: Project Eden* and the relatively unknown *Arion*, a Harryhausen-esque yarn from Yoshikazu Yasuhiko (and yes, I got the name right this time). Her list of "Anime to Avoid," meanwhile, features *Vampire Hunter D*, *The Gigolo*, the space-opera *Odin* and *Golgo 13*, though the last two are slammed for their importing as much as for intrinsic faults (*Odin* was cut by forty minutes!). Several controversial titles, including

the *Urotsukidoji* saga, are treated kindly, though OAVs like *Crying Freeman* and the Brit-banned *La Blue Girl* (Stephen Cooke's favourite anime, not!) are given short shrift. Most of Helen's points are fair, though I'd balk at the claim that *Fist of the North Star* has "the epic sweep of a spaghetti Eastern," or that the American-marketed *Golgo 13* is "a damning indictment of our tastes from the outside." In both cases I favour the shorter fan view - they suck!

McCarthy has seen more anime than is safe for sanity, but she admits when she's relying on secondary sources, and some entries are only outlined, to be filled in future editions. Her synopses are clear and concise, though she has a tendency to spoil the ending - if you don't want to know how *Iczer-One* came out, don't read the Act 3 review! As far as accuracy goes, I'm informed (secondary sources again) there are errors, but the only one I noticed was her claim that *Laputa* runs an incredible three hours (if only!). Some of the information is dated - there's no mention of the US *Here is Greenwood* video, for example - but it's probably safe to trust the *Guide* in most areas.

The last criticism - apart from sometimes unclear stills, many of which are overly familiar - is McCarthy's omission of numerous smaller titles, along with TV material. Despite the presence of *Only Yesterday*, *Aim for the Ace!* (a tennis drama) and the harrowing *Barefoot Gen*, the selection feels limited. For many critics it'll confirm the view that anime is all horror, SF and fantasy and can be dismissed along with those genres. The inclusion of TV titles (soaps? sitcoms?) would dent this impression, as would an account of the industry's development generally.

But these are quibbles. *The Anime Movie Guide* is a book by a writer devoted to her subject, and this shines through on every page. For the vast majority of info-hungry anime fans, it's a must. **Andrew Osmond**

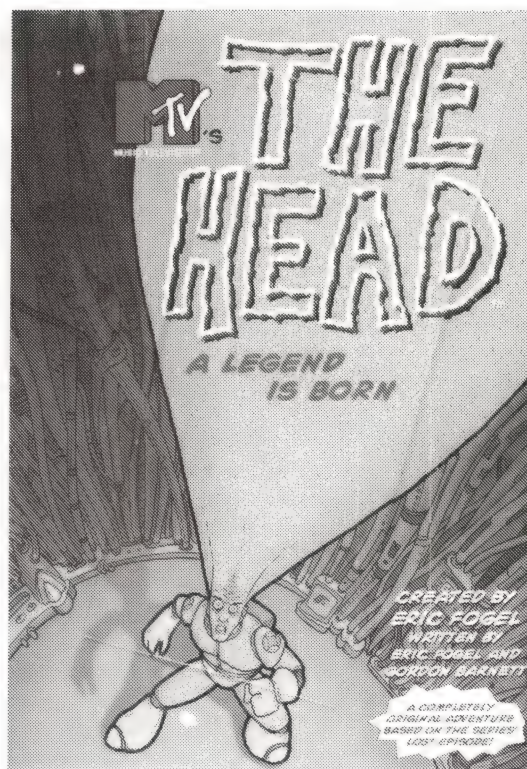
The Head: A Legend is Born

Written by Eric Fogel and Gordon Barnett

Art by Chris Pynoski, Jody Schaeffer, Brad McDonald and Matt Sheridan
MTV Books/Pocket Books

I liked *The Head's* animated adventures a great deal as the production wisely combines the best use of its limited animation style with some witty writing. I also have to say that I enjoyed this book, the second MTV animation adaptation.

Unlike the *Aeon Flux* book, though, this



The Head: A Legend is Born features a fold-out cover.

faithful rendering of the Head and his pals, as they once again battle the deadly brain parasites, would play much better within the thin covers and on newsprint of a traditional comic book. The *Aeon Flux* book was a hybrid of comic book and science fiction novella, and the story's format justified the higher production values (and cost) of a trade paperback.

This adventure plays mostly in outer space when Roy comes to the aid of his younger goof-up brother. This trip snaps The Head out of a serious funk which had almost destroyed his relationship with Madeline who is carrying his child. The art style is straight from the animated series and the story is told in a crisp and funny style.

The only criticism I have is that, aside from the fold-out front cover, *The Head: A Legend is Born* just doesn't deserve the book format and the high price. Frankly, I think *The Head* could make be a great on-going comic book series. Using the paperback format, though, insures distribution in bookstores where a potentially greater market of readers, though. **GMD**

Animation, Caricature, and Gag and Political Cartoons in the United States and Canada:

An International Bibliography
compiled by John A. Lent
Greenwood Press, Westport CT

For historians of comic art and animation

this bibliography compiled by college professor John Lent (who is also managing editor of *WittyWorld International Cartoon Magazine*) comes as a welcomed addition to a research library.

Lent has taken thousands of articles on animation, caricature and political cartoons and categorized them by a wide range of subjects. A subject index and author index make navigating through this book very easy. This volume and access to a good periodicals room can yield some great information for animation historians.

The appeal of this book is the lengthy section on cartoon animation which list books and periodicals in classifications that begin with "general studies" and "early years" to sections on specific film makers (Tex Avery, Art Babbitt, and Ralph Bakshi lead the listing) to individual characters and films to studios. In many of the categories there are a satisfying number of entries, while others seem too short. For example, Walter Lantz's long career is only represented by four entries; his authorized biography and three newspaper articles from 1971, 1981, and 1969. I know there must be more than just that.

And there is. The difficulty is finding the material. For this magazine, Lent lists an address which hasn't been used in over three years, and I know he has not seen any of the issues that have been produced since the fall of 1992 when Patrick and I bought this publication.

The listings do not give any hint, beyond the title of the article or book, of the contents of the cited entry and the end of the animation section has listings for articles covering clay, computer, live action (animation in live-action films) and puppet that are woefully inadequate. For example, While George Pal is noted in two articles under "puppet," no where is either Ray Harryhausen or Willis O'Brien mentioned, which is an amazing oversight.

These points aside, Lent's bibliography is certainly something I'll use and recommend.
GMD

Interactive

Disney's Animated Storybook: Toy Story
Mac/PC CD Rom
Disney Interactive

I must admit that when I found out that the original voice actors weren't used on Disney's *Animated Storybook* computer CD-ROM, my initial enthusiasm was tempered. I'm sure it was a licensing issue, but with a little forethought that could have been taken care of when the actors were lined up for the original movie. I'll give the Disney folks this much - they did their best to closely match the voices of the original characters. In fact, in some cases, you have to



A screen from Disney's Animated Storybook: Toy Story. (© The Walt Disney Company, © Pixar)

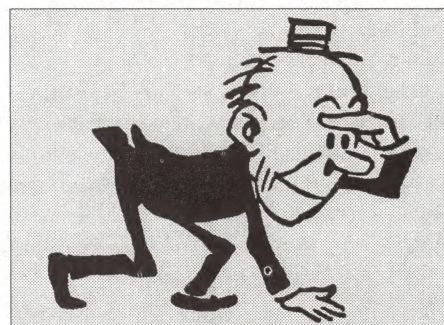
listen hard to discern the difference.

As a whole the CD is enjoyable and the artwork by Pixar is as impressive as it was on screen. Hamm the Pig is your tour guide through an abridged book that outlines the plot of the the movie. There are two ways to go through the story. The basic way is to simply read along with the text in the book. The other option is to scroll from page to page and play along by moving some of the characters, clicking buttons, navigating through a maze, or matching numbers and colors. This may not sound real challenging for most of us, but my eight-year old daughter had hours of fun.

The folks at Disney Interactive made this very easy for young children to navigate through. Within ten minutes after I helped explain the various buttons, my eight year-old daughter Emily dismissed me from the room and spent the next couple of hours exploring. A few days later, she went back and ran the program again and passively sat back and read along with Hamm.

The one drawback to a program like this is re-playability. After playing the little games a couple of times, and watching the story unfold, you've seen the whole thing. I suppose it's much like the choice of what movies to buy on tape - do I love it that much and will I watch it again. If you or your child were enthralled with the movie, then this is a good buy for you.

Gene Gumbs 



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FROM THE INKWELL



New Thinking for New Times

Recently *TV Guide* had its annual look at children's television and presented coverage on *Rugrats*, *Brand Spankin' New Doug*, *Kablam!*, *Hey Arnold*, *Dragon Ball*, and *Superman* among others. It was fascinating to see how Nickelodeon critically dominates the field of television animation. From the hyper-critical *TV Guide* point of view Nick can practically do no wrong. It should be noted from the onset that there are indeed other new shows worthy of attention other than these.

But what's Nick's secret? Here Disney buys ABC, begins a re-tooling of their Saturday morning line-up and the only ink they get is from the new edition of *Doug*, the original series is still being re-broadcasted on Nick. Is Nick paying someone off at *TV Guide*?

I don't think so. Instead the braintrust of execs at Nickelodeon realizes that families watch their shows, not just kids, and their animated programs offer something for people of a wide variety of ages. The network also schedules these shows at times which adults can view them.

At a time in the television business when the networks are worrying about declining audiences and further fracturing of the potential television audience by cable channels, one might think someone would look at taking a hard look at programming traditions. Who says Saturday morning is the only time for family animated programming? The only network with the guts to do something intelligent counter-programming is Fox with their Fox Kids afternoon shows.

NBC abandoned their traditional children's programming for a mixture of news, sports and live-action pap disguised as programming for young teens. CBS and ABC both stick with the old formula. It's time to wise up guys and produce shows with a broader audience base and show

them at more flexible times.

Congrats to the Cartoon Network

Do my eyes deceive me? Is something cool happening at the Cartoon Network? As The Brain would say, "Yeeeeessss!" The network I had about written off as merely an excuse to re-run the worst shows of the '70s has come back with some really good programming acquisitions; first, *Speed Racer*, then *George of the Jungle*, and now *Rocky and Bullwinkle* and *Roger Ramjet*. *Dexter's Laboratory* is pretty damn funny and the noble experiment *World Premiere Toons* still continues. The other evening I was floored to see a show of independent short animated films.

Well, I'm sure it's not proper to give all the credit to the Director of Programming at the network, but I will. Linda Simensky, take a bow! The Cartoon Network has had some interesting ideas (Moxie), some great ideas (*Space Ghost Coast to Coast*) and some inexplicable ones (Carrot Top), but now I think things are coming together.

Now if they could only effectively use their great library of black and white cartoons...maybe package them in a show called *Toon 101* hosted by a portly but charming animation magazine editor. Hey Linda, I've got five years of broadcast experience and I'll even shave my beard!

Are the Execs at the WB Nuts?

Where's *My Pinky and The Brain*? C'mon where the heck is it? Saturday morning?! Nope! Wrong answer! You folks at WB took one of the best animated shows of the last ten years off of primetime and replaced it with what? One of those hideous cast-off sit-coms the other networks didn't want? Aieeee!

Here's the deal...*Pinky and The Brain* is well-written, more than adequately animated and has one of the best vocal

teams in animation. It is far and away better entertainment than a show with all the Lawrence brothers, Kirk Cameron and those twin sisters combined.

But you folks took it off of prime-time and put it back into the Saturday a.m. ghetto! Please re-consider your schedule and put them back where they belong.

On Your Marks Cartoon Collectors...

Buena Vista Home Video has just announced that *Bambi* will be released as a special 55th anniversary edition on February 4. The tape will contain footage not previously seen on homevid and will have a special booklet. The suggested retail price will be \$26.99.

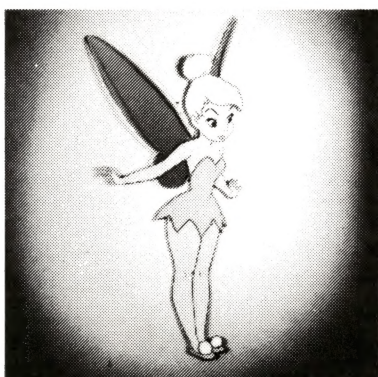
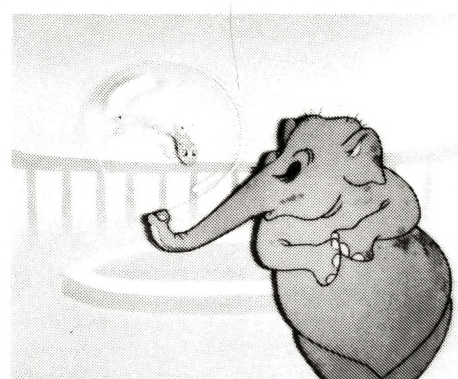
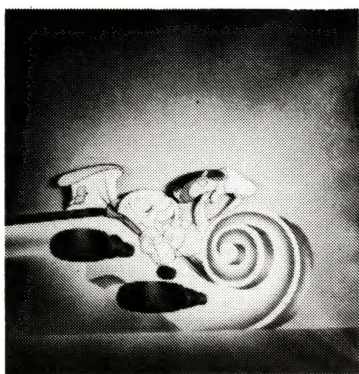
You will have exactly 55 days to buy the tape before the inventory is pulled from the retailers. The company learned a valuable lesson from its 50 day sales period in 1991 for *Fantasia*; if you limit the availability, people will go crazy. According to the industry trade magazine *Video Business*, Buena Vista sold 14 million tapes of *Fantasia* in that 50 day period!

With all the high profile summer hit movies coming to video in the next few months (*The Nutty Professor*, *Mission Impossible*, *Independence Day*, etc.) the Buena Vista folks have developed sure-fire way of getting the consumers' attention...make a movie even more special by making it "rare." This is nothing new as they have been limiting the sales of many "classic" titles, but *Bambi* is the latest to be marketed this way.

And just watch, after the sales period is over, the dealers who sell out-of-print tapes will jack the price to over \$100.00 which is what they did to *Fantasia*.

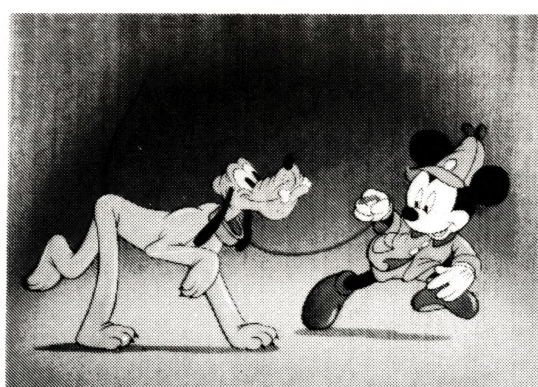
Mike

VINTAGE ANIMATION ART



- Rare Disney animation celluloids
- Original background paintings
- Pastel "storyboard" drawings
- Vintage pencil animation drawings
- Catalog available on request

An exclusive private gallery since 1978,
specializing in museum/investment quality
vintage Disney studio animation art
for the discerning collector.

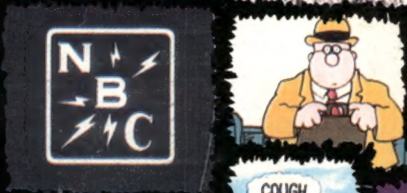
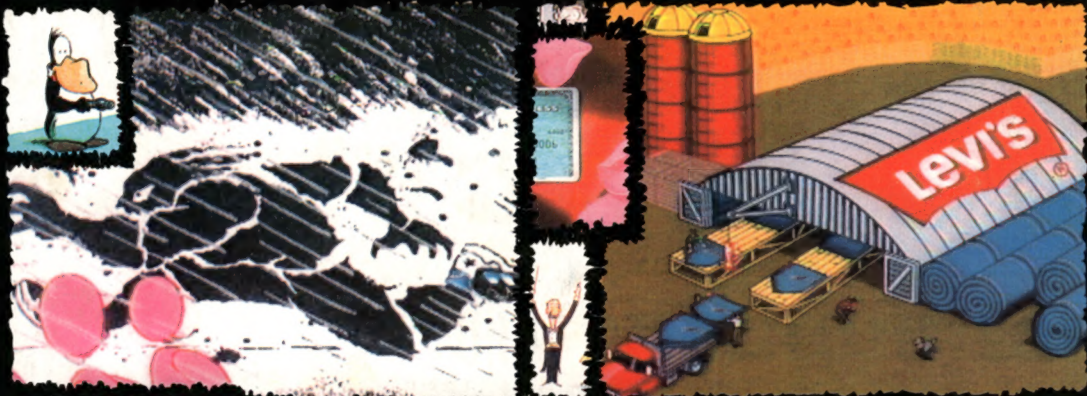


-By appointment-

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